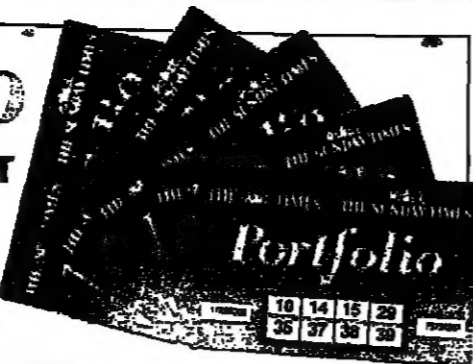


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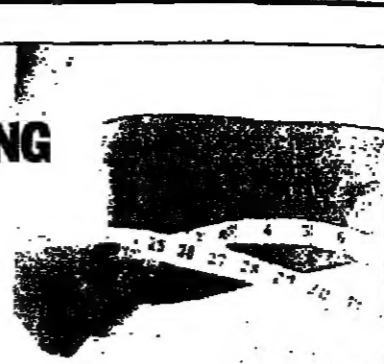
BEST FOR BOOKS

Why Martin Amis
lacks heart, by
Russell Celyn Jones
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THE PERIL OF SLIMMING PILLS

Dr Thomas
Stuttaford
PAGE 20



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Alarm over fall in convictions

Rape victims may get new deal in court

By STEWART TENDLER AND RICHARD FORD

RAPE victims may be allowed to give evidence from behind screens and be spared grueling cross-examination as part of a drive to bring more sex attackers to justice.

Police, MPs and women's groups are all pressing the Home Secretary to act after figures released yesterday showed that far more women are being raped, but far fewer men are being tried or convicted.

The number of rapes reported to police has trebled over the past 12 years to just under 6,000 in 1996 — and some officers say that is a massive underestimate, with only one in ten victims thought to come forward. But the number of prosecutions and convictions has fallen, so that only 19 per cent of complaints lead to a court case — and only half of those end with a conviction.

More than one hundred MPs, many of them Labour backbenchers, have now signed a Commons motion calling for sweeping changes to court procedures and Jack Straw has promised to consider reforms.

He said yesterday that he was extremely concerned by the figures, which indicated that the sea-change in the way police investigated rape complaints had not been fully reflected by the courts or the legal profession.

There is a great deal to do to make the system better and more sensitive to the needs of the victim. More needs to be done to protect witnesses in court. We have to get away

from the hostile environment. Victims have already suffered one trial with the rape itself. Mr Straw said that screening victims from their alleged attackers was one possibility. Another was to curtail the often lengthy cross-examination of victims about their previous sexual history: the Home Secretary wants to ensure that such questioning is allowed only if strictly relevant.

Two studies are already underway in an attempt to tackle the problem. The Home Office is following more than 500 cases from the first complaint to the court case in an effort to raise the standard of evidence against suspects and improve the environment for victims and other vulnerable witnesses.

At the same time, the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the judiciary are examining how the present system operates and how various departments co-operate.

Nigel Pascoe, QC, chairman of the Bar's public affairs committee, said he backed an overhaul of the rape laws — including screens to surround victims or allowing them to give evidence by video link — so long as they still allowed vigorous cross-examination. "Times have changed. Today we extend much greater protection to victims of sexual assault," he said.

But any such changes are likely to prove controversial with civil liberties groups, which argue that allowing screens around a victim giving

evidence is a further erosion of a fundamental part of the legal process.

John Wadham, director of Liberty, the civil rights pressure group, said: "The difficulty with this is where are we going to draw the line. There may be a number of steps that need to be taken to protect vulnerable witnesses, but there is a fundamental right of trial in the open where the defendant can confront his or her accuser. That should not be given away lightly."

The case for reform was presented vividly yesterday by a victim who waived her anonymity to address the Police Superintendents' Association conference in Bristol.

Sinisa Vig, who was left pregnant after being attacked by a family friend, asked why the courts "cannot be civilised to someone who has been through the most terrible experience of their lives. I felt I was on trial."

After she spoke, the association overwhelmingly backed a motion calling for radical reform to help rape victims in court, and to stop serial date-rapists walking free. One detective told the conference that Scotland Yard knew of up to ten such men preying on women in London. Detective Superintendent Bill Graham said that they befriended women in bars and clubs with a premeditated view to rape confident that they would never be convicted. "I know of a handful of these date-rapists who offend over and over again."



Shirley Wigginton: forced to booby-trap her home against former boyfriend

Rejected lover in military stake-out

By STEPHEN FARRELL

A FORMER Army engineer suspended for two years and ordered to pay £200 compensation at Nottingham Crown Court after he admitted causing actual bodily harm to his wife in March and June last year.

Judge Alistair McDuff, QC, described his conduct as "wicked and threatening", but said he suspended the sentence because Payne had moved out of the area and changed his behaviour.

The sentence was last night attacked by Mrs Wigginton, a widow and mother of two children. She said: "It's like he has been allowed to walk away. He's probably laughing about it. Despite everything he's done to me, he hasn't had to pay for any of it. I still break down and get depressed."

The court heard the couple came together after her husband died, and they

bought a house together. However, the relationship soured because of Payne's violent temper and by February 1996 she had obtained two injunctions and a county court order to remove him. He finally left but began to stalk out the house, threatening her children and running through the back garden wearing a balaclava mask.

Last night Mrs Wigginton, who has only recently stopped taking tranquilisers, told how she was so scared that she asked a close friend to move in with her. They turned the home into a virtual fortress, barricading themselves in at night with saucapans balanced on top of the ironing board against the back door.

A charge of burglary at Mrs Wigginton's home was ordered to lie on the file.

Payne, 43, was yesterday sentenced to two years in jail

Clinton rejects landmine treaty

By OUR FOREIGN STAFF

WASHINGTON yesterday refused to sign a treaty banning landmines. A draft version had been approved in Oslo earlier in the day.

Defending the decision, President Clinton said America could not sign an agreement that failed to accept the special responsibilities of the world's only superpower. "Unfortunately, as it is drafted, I cannot in good conscience add America's name," he said.

The sticking point for Washington is Korea. With only 37,000 Americans supporting South Korean troops against

hundreds of thousands of North Korean forces across the border, the President argued that America was justified in keeping anti-tank and anti-personnel mines in the peninsula.

America wants a nine-year exemption from the treaty for Korea. It also wants states to be allowed to withdraw from the treaty if they are attacked.

Robin Cook last night welcomed the accord, describing it as the beginning of the end for landmines. "This achievement is due in part to the work of Diana, Princess of Wales, who did so much to focus the attention of the world on the horrific effects of anti-personnel landmines," the Foreign Secretary said. Britain would continue to urge as many countries as possible to sign the treaty, he added.

Global ban, page 16

Job figures raise interest rate fear

Financial markets are braced for further interest rate rises after statistics showed unemployment at a 17-year low and the high street spending boom continuing.

Unemployment fell to 1.496,500 — 5.3 per cent of the workforce — in August, the lowest since 1980. Retail sales rose 0.4 per cent, the same rate as in July, although the annual rate slipped from 6.7 per cent to a still robust 5.6 per cent. Pages 23, 27

Unionists revive peace process

Ulster Unionists revived the peace process by returning to Stormont for the first time since Sinn Féin was admitted to the talks.

Declaring that republican terrorists would not drive his Ulster Unionist Party from the process, David Trimble broke one of unionism's taboos by marching his delegation into the same building as Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. Page 2

Paxman denounces 'sausage machine' BBC news

By RAYMOND SNOODY AND CAROL MIDDLEY



LEADING BBC presenter yesterday added their weight to editors, producers and journalists in opposing plans to abolish individual editorships for news programmes. Jeremy Paxman, the Newsnight presenter now on leave to write a book, said yesterday that the plan to create centralised news teams would turn the BBC News operation into a "sausage machine".

All producers and presenters of Radio 4's flagship Today programme, including Anna Ford, John Humphrys, James

Naughtie, Sue MacGregor and Nick Clarke, presenter of the World at One, plus Robin Lustig and James Cox have signed a letter describing the changes as "unacceptable".

The letter will go to Richard Clegg, head of BBC news programmes who announced the changes to staff on Tuesday — changes that will see four executive editors take over responsibility for blocks of news programming. Associate editors will have responsibilities for a number of individual programmes and a fifth executive editor will have responsibility for commissioning features across the entire

radio and television news output. The feature commissioner's budget will come from the individual programmes.

Austin Mitchell, the Labour MP and broadcaster said last night the changes were "a dog's dinner" and "further BBC insanity". He was referring to John Birt the BBC Director-General.

"This is putting all news into the Birtian Kenwood mixer. The Nine O'Clock News will simply be a reshuffled version of the 24-hour television news rather than the way it was around."

Parliament, and write to both the BBC Governors and Chris Smith, the Culture, Media and Sports Secretary.

A former senior member of the BBC board of management, who asked not to be named, said yesterday that the plan meant the BBC would be "producing news like extruded plastic. You just break off a bit."

One senior editor who has decided not to apply for one of the new executive editor posts said yesterday that he had seen BBC financial projections showing that in between two and three years the amount of

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Lib Dems hail 'deal on PR'

An era of closer
co-operation
between Labour
and the Lib
Dems began, says
Jill Sherman

THE Liberal Democrats claimed last night that they had reached agreement with Labour to press ahead with the first steps towards proportional representation for electing Westminster MPs.

After yesterday's historic meeting of the new Cabinet committee which includes Liberal Democrats as well as Labour ministers, sources close to Paddy Ashdown said the party was now confident that the commission to look at electoral reform would be set up this autumn. There had been concern that the Prime Minister, who is personally against proportional representation, would renege on an agreement made before the election between Robin Cook and Robert Maclennan, the Liberal Democrat president, to set up the commission. Labour's manifesto also commits the party to holding a referendum on electoral reform before the end of this Parliament, although there has been speculation that this might be delayed or dropped.

But last night a senior Liberal Democrat source said: "The commission will be set up this autumn. We have



The Prime Minister with Paddy Ashdown and colleagues at the first meeting of the new Cabinet committee, at Downing Street yesterday

made progress and the Cook/Maclennan agreement is on track."

Mr Maclennan said: "It was a good meeting. I think it bodes well for the constructive implementation of the proposals in our report agreed before the election."

However, Downing Street later played down the significance of the move, claiming that it had already agreed to set up the commission but no timetable had been set and no

chairman had been appointed. The new committee, comprising five senior Liberal Democrats, including Mr Ashdown and six ministers including Tony Blair, marks the strongest alliance between the two parties since the Lib-Lab pact of the 1970s.

It paves the way for an era of closer co-operation during this Parliament while falling short of any formal coalition.

Last week Mr Ashdown, the Liberal Democrat leader, an-

nounced some in his party by suggesting that it would have formed a coalition with Labour, had the general election produced a hung parliament or a small Labour majority. Last night sources close to Mr Ashdown emphasised that the party still intended to make "constructive criticism" of Labour where there was disagreement.

The 90-minute meeting at Downing Street, chaired by the Prime Minister, focused

on constitutional reform and was described as "friendly, positive and workmanlike" by both sides. The two parties also agreed to co-operate in pushing through legislation to follow the referendum campaigns in Scotland and Wales.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary and a proponent of PR, said: "The attitude and atmosphere was down-to-earth; a working relationship. We're going to make Britain a fair, open, modern democracy

and today's meeting was a step in that direction."

Mr Ashdown said: "This is about opening a new path to a more co-operative style of politics." The Cabinet committee is expected to meet once every two months, but the members agreed to meet each other informally when appropriate.

At the Liberal Democrat conference, which starts this weekend, activists opposed to closer links with Labour are expected to voice concern.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Hague takes blame for attack on Blair

William Hague told the Shadow Cabinet last night that he took full responsibility for his strongly criticised attack on Tony Blair for allegedly making political capital from the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Mr Hague, whom many Conservative politicians believe was let down by his advisers, told his leading frontbenchers, meeting for the first time for six weeks, that no blame should be attached to anybody else.

Mr Hague was clearly defending his friend and chief adviser, Alan Duncan, who has been criticised by many Tory politicians, including members of the Shadow Cabinet, for allegedly inspiring the attack on Mr Blair by Mr Hague in an interview with Sir David Frost on Sunday. According to Tory sources, there had been no mention of Mr Duncan during the meeting. But it was acknowledged afterwards that Mr Duncan's role of day-to-day briefing of the press would end when Gregor Mackay was appointed shortly as Mr Hague's personal press secretary. Mr Duncan will retain an important advisory position in Mr Hague's office.

Services to keep war role

The Armed Forces will be allowed to retain the ability to take part in "high-intensity" warfare under the Government's long-term review of defence, George Robertson, Defence Secretary, is to announce today. Although Britain can no longer act as a world policeman, it will continue to "make a difference" and the three Services will not be confined to peacekeeping operations, he will say at the Royal United Services Institute in London. His remarks are likely to be welcomed by the military, which has resisted proposals to turn it into a peacekeeping militia.

Govan inquiry renewed

Police have been asked by the Procurator Fiscal in Glasgow to make further inquiries into claims of wrongdoing in the Govan constituency of the Labour MP Mohammed Sarwar. A report into allegations of bribery was submitted by police last month. A spokesman for the Procurator Fiscal said the request for more information was routine and simply formed part of a continuing inquiry. Mr Sarwar, who has not yet been questioned by officers, has fiercely denied claims and said he was confident that the police report would clear his name.

Boys, 12, accused of rape

A 12-year-old boy appeared in court accused of the rape of his five-year-old niece in the Harehills area of Leeds on Sunday. Another boy of 12 was also charged. Both boys were remanded into local authority care by a youth court panel sitting at Leeds. The case was adjourned for a week. The girl was being looked after by Leeds social services staff after earlier being made the subject of a protection order.

Rail complaints rise

Complaints by rail passengers to a watchdog group have risen sharply. Figures released yesterday show a 55.8 per cent increase in letters to the Rail Users Consultative Committee, which deals with complaints when passengers are dissatisfied with the response they received from a rail company. There were 2,799 complaints from April to June, when all 25 train operators were in private hands.

Flu plea by doctors

Doctors are urging people with a cold or sore throat this winter to treat themselves rather than see their GP. Last year a third of adults claimed to have flu, of whom a third saw their doctors, leading to more than four million consultations. GPs said that help should be sought only if severe symptoms developed. The Royal College of Nursing advised old people not to be deterred from seeking help.

Hotel for tiny tots opens

A hotel catering solely for children under five where room service can provide a bedtime story or change a nappy is to open in London for the well-heeled parent who has to work late or travel on business. The young guests can stay for a night, a weekend or a week in the care of 20 nursery nurses and entertainers. A day and night at the Hopes and Dreams nursery in Islington costs about £100.

Gold bars go duty free

Miniature gold bars, known as biscuits, have gone on sale as duty-free goods at London's main airports. The 3.75oz bars, which measure 46mm by 25mm by 6mm, are being offered for about £130 less than the going rate of £793.69. They are expected to prove particularly attractive to Indian and Pakistani travellers who often use gold as currency. The gold is being sold VAT-free by Traveler.

Waxworks on the wane

Bart Simpson and Stalin are among 60 life-size waxwork models and props to be auctioned at a Phillips sale in York next month. They come from the city's Friargate wax museum, opened in 1983, which is closing after the recent death of one of its founders. A limited edition of the Domesday Book is expected to fetch up to £2,500, with Bart estimated at £300-£500 and Stalin at £700-£1,000.

Ulster talks revived with return of Unionists

By MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

ULSTER Unionists revived Northern Ireland's peace process yesterday by returning to Stormont for the first time since Sinn Féin was admitted to the multiparty talks.

David Trimble, in declaring that republican terrorists would not drive his Ulster Unionist Party from the process, broke one of Unionism's oldest taboos by marching his delegation into the same building as Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and other Sinn Féin delegates.

Mr Trimble, speaking a day after the Markhill bomb, said that the UUP had come to confront, not negotiate with, Sinn Féin and would be demanding its expulsion after

Tuesday's bombing and the IRA's disavowal last week of the Mitchell principles of democracy and non-violence.

He refused to say if or when his party would sit in the same room as the IRA's political representatives, but other political leaders had no doubt that the UUP's return was a prelude to the first full-scale, round-table negotiations involving Unionists and republicans since Ireland's partition in 1921. At the very least, the UUP will have to face Sinn Féin to argue its case for its expulsion. A plenary session on that issue is expected within a fortnight.

Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary, praised Mr Trimble's "courageous" deci-



David Trimble with UUP MPs and delegates arriving at Stormont yesterday

sion to return to Stormont. Ray Burke, the Irish Foreign Minister, said the unexpected presence of the UUP and Sinn Féin under the same roof was hugely significant.

The UUP planned a theatrical 10am arrival at Stormont for the media's benefit, but Sinn Féin managed to get its own 16-member delegation there first. As Mr Trimble's team was forced to linger outside the gates, Mr Adams held forth, expressing the hope that the UUP would now stop its "play-acting" and "get down to the serious business of making peace."

Then it was the UUP's turn. Flanked by fellow MPs and leaders of the loyalist Ulster Democratic and Progressive

Unionist parties, Mr Trimble marched a small army of aides up the driveway to a battery of microphones. The UUP had returned to defend the Union, he said. "With the Ulster Unionists at the table there will be no united Ireland. There will be no joint sovereignty... There will be no agreement coming out of these talks which is not clearly a United Kingdom solution."

The UUP had no illusions about the character of Sinn Féin, he said. "We have not invited them to the table. But we are not afraid of them. We will not run away from them. We are not there to negotiate with them, but to confront them — to expose their fascist character," Mr Trimble also

condemned Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party for boycotting the talks and accusing the UUP of conniving in the Union's destruction. "Those that walk out leave the Union undefended," he said. "They surrender the defence of the Union, leaving it to the tender mercies of the British and Irish Governments."

David Ervine, the Progressive Unionist Party leader, said there was now a chance to exorcise the ghosts of an ancient quarrel: "Let the debate begin. We are ready."

Inside, the Unionist and Sinn Féin delegations have offices on different floors and the only place they might meet unintentionally is in the canteen.

Proposals to ease beef ban approved

FROM CHARLES BREMNER IN BRUSSELS

EUROPEAN scientists yesterday approved British proposals for a partial easing of the worldwide ban on beef exports, clearing the way to a possible European Union decision by the end of the year.

The scientific veterinary committee broadly accepted a scheme to allow the export of beef from herds that are certified to have been free of BSE for eight years provided they are subject to

a stringent computerised tracing system. This condition effectively limits any easing to cattle from Northern Ireland, the only region with such a system.

The scientists' opinion allows the Commission to start the process that could lead to member states agreeing to start easing the ban, which was imposed in March 1996.

British officials were guarded about the prospects of an eventual easing of the embargo. With emotion still running high on the Continent against any

readmission of British beef to shops on the European mainland, the consent of the rest of the EU could still be hard to win. "This is about the first of six steps along the way to getting the ban lifted," a British official said. The next step is for the Commission to produce a proposal and seek the opinion of the committee of national veterinary representatives.

The Government was last night reviewing the committee's opinion before deciding how to act. One option was now to make a formal request to

the Commission to have the ban eased, officials said.

The committee's decision does however amount to the first positive EU action over British beef since the Commission forced through a decision in mid-1996 to allow the export of gelatine, a move that was later suspended. The Florence agreement, struck in June 1996 after John Major's campaign of non-cooperation, stipulates that the ban can be progressively eased once Britain satisfies purely scientific conditions.

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DELL

'Greedy' Sugar forced me out, says Venables

By MICHAEL HORSNELL

TERRY VENABLES, the former England football coach, told a jury yesterday that he was driven out of Tottenham Hotspur by the lies and greed of his partner, Alan Sugar, chairman of the North London club.

Mr Venables said that he then lost his England job because events had made the international committee nervous of retaining him.

After the 1991 takeover by the two men of the club, which had debts of £16 million, profits of £3 million and £5 million were made in the next two years.

After that Mr Sugar, the Amstrad tycoon, decided he wanted it all to himself, Mr Venables said. Describing the collapse of their relationship which led to his departure in 1993, Mr Venables told Knightsbridge Crown Court: "He just got big eyes, got greedy and wanted the lot."

Mr Venables, who became chief executive of Spurs after the takeover, was giving evidence on behalf of his business associate, Edward Ashby, who is accused of serving the club as a £17,000-a-year general manager while an undischarged bankrupt.

In an action brought by the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr Ashby, 53, denies four counts of being involved in managing the club, two of its subsidiary companies and the London nightclub Scribes West, owned by Mr Venables.

The prosecution maintains that he hired and fired staff and was involved in management decisions, but Mr Ashby claims that he was merely Mr Venables' "glorified secretary".

Mr Venables said that Mr Ashby was only ever an assistant and that he did not know that Spurs notepaper bore the title "general manager" in letters written by Mr Ashby. "I ran the show myself," he said.

Mr Venables also denied knowing that Mr Ashby was responsible for preparing a business plan for the club in 1991 presented to the board after the takeover. The case continues today.



Midge Mather outside yesterday's hearing. She told the police: "I want to go to court. I wasn't flogging my guts out for two hours and a half hours for nothing"

The ringing confession

Angry villager, 64, sabotaged church bells then telephoned police and councillors to say that she did it. Simon de Bruxelles reports

THERE was no doubt about the culprit when someone broke down the heavy oak door of a 12th-century village church and cut the bell ropes with a hacksaw. Midge Mather, 64, personally telephoned every member of the parochial church council to tell them what she had done, and then called the police.

Tired of the noise from the bells of St Swithun's in Compton Bassett, Wiltshire, she wanted everyone to know of her protest, and even offered to leave a light switched on outside her cottage so that police could find their way to arrest her. She was disappointed when officers said that initially they would just make a report.

"But look, I want to go to court," she told them. "Come off it, I wasn't flogging my guts out for two hours and a half hours for nothing."

A tape recording of the telephone call was played yesterday as Mrs Mather had

her wish, appearing before Chippenham magistrates accused of causing criminal damage worth £1,852.25 to the 500-year-old door and six bell ropes. She is defending herself, claiming that she acted under duress and had no choice because the noise was placing the life of her brother, John, in danger.

She had broken down the door with a crowbar, clambered on a box balanced on a chair and cut the bell ropes with a hacksaw. In her phone call, she said: "Is that the police? My name is Mrs Mather and I think you ought to come out and arrest me. I have just cut the bells at my church and smashed the door down. I will put the outside light on so you can find me."

I've asked for meetings and meetings and I've got nothing.

"The only thing I could do was take it into my hands. My brother could have done it himself but of course it would have killed him. He was blown up on D-Day. He was a commando."

"I had to clamber over the door. One time I got stuck because I'm a bit fat, but I managed it in the end. I've been up and cut six ropes. I've had to stand on a box at 64 years of age, wobbling like hell, but I managed it."

Mrs Mather arrived at court wearing a black pillbox and veil, and carrying a 5ft tubular building prop wrapped in a red gingham tea towel. The pole was identical

to one used to block the door to the belltower after Mrs Mather had threatened to sabotage a visit by a group of campanologists from Oxfordshire.

Guy Knell, for the prosecution, said that until Mrs Mather began complaining several years ago, groups from all over the country would come to ring them. The number of visits was cut and efforts were made to warn her in advance of bellringing sessions.

He said: "The church authorities have done their best to try to accommodate Mrs Mather over the bellringing. They are people normally used to dealing in terms of peace and understanding. There have been times when Mrs Mather's rather confrontational approach has left them rather nonplussed."

Mrs Mather said that she had never been invited to discuss the problem with the church council despite numerous complaints, and had not been informed the ringing was being cut back. But John Reis, secretary of the church council, said the reason no one had told her was because "unfortunately your calls were long and ranting and it was impossible for the recipient to get a word in edgewise."

Dr David Bishop, captain of the bells, said he arranged for the steel bar to be placed behind the bellry door after she had made threats in the local newspaper. The ropes were tied out of reach and the safety rope to the stairs was

removed. Mrs Mather asked him whether it had been his intention that "I should fall and break my neck". Dr Bishop, a GP, replied: "The intention was to stop you going up in the first place."

The hearing threatened to descend into farce when George Calvert, an elderly war veteran and former judge's clerk helping Mrs Mather with her case, muttered to a witness: "You are arrogant, sir."

After being admonished by the magistrate, he said: "I won't be intimidated by anyone" and resigned as legal adviser, to be replaced by Mrs Mather's daughter, Rebekah Sloane-Mather. Mr Calvert was later taken into custody after shouting at the magistrate, who had told Mrs Mather to sit down when she complained that she was not being allowed to summon several witnesses, including the Bishop of Salisbury.

The case continues today.

JP who exposed bottom loses her seat

By FRANCES GIBBS
LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

A MAGISTRATE who was photographed exposing her bottom has been told by the Lord Chancellor that she may no longer sit on the bench. Josie Lewis has been told that her "mooning" failed to uphold "the dignity, standing and good reputation" of the magistracy.

Her dismissal from the Swindon Bench comes after an incident in April when she bared her backside at Brian Woodfield, a stable owner. Miss Lewis, 45, had been collecting some property from the stables at Wootton Bassett, Wiltshire, when she became involved in an argument with Mr Woodfield and dropped her breeches at him as she left.

He already had his camera out to take pictures of the tackle she was removing as she had not signed an inventory, and got a photograph of her bottom. She has now been sent a letter by Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor, telling her that she can no longer sit as a Justice of the Peace.

Miss Lewis, a freelance publicist and journalist, said: "My future work commitments would not have left me available to sit anyway. There are other ways I can help in the community. I have never met anybody who has ever condemned me for it. They have all treated it as quite light-hearted. I do not see any reason why I should have resigned. If the Lord Chancellor has made this decision, then there's nothing I can do."

Mr Woodfield said: "I think it's for the best. She should have resigned long ago. It's not fitting for someone who can send people to jail to act in such a manner. I'm sure if she had sat on a case where someone had mooned she would have taken a very dim view."

Honeymoon couple survive balloon crash in Mexico

By PHILIP DELVES
BRIGHTON

A BRITISH couple on honeymoon in Mexico survived after they fell 2,500ft when a hot air balloon they were travelling in ripped open and caught fire. David and Vicky Martin looked up just minutes after lifting off from the resort of Puerto Vallarta to see the balloon tearing open above them and then bursting into flames. The six passengers and pilot dropped to the ground at a speed of more than 40mph.

"Everybody was laughing and joking as we got up in the air, saying 'We must be mad doing this'," Mr Martin, 30, from Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, said. "Then I looked up and saw the balloon had ripped all the way around about halfway up and I could see the sky through the hole."

"The pilot had told us because the balloon was patchwork it was not supposed to rip. I just thought 'Oh my God we are going to die, this can't be happening...'"

The balloon caught fire and the passengers, all honeymoon couples, were told to crouch down to avoid being burnt. Mr Martin said: "It was the hardest thing in the world not being able to hold my wife's hand while all this was happening. Every time I close my eyes now I see the ground coming up towards



David and Vicky Martin on their wedding day

me. Vicky said to me 'We're going to die, aren't we...'"

As they hit the ground he and the other passengers crawled clear of the wreckage and he heard his wife crying out that she could not move her legs. He said: "She thought she had broken her back and asked me if I would still love her if she was in a wheelchair for the rest of her life."

The pilot then shouted to Mr Martin to pull his wife clear as the balloon's fuel tanks could explode at any

minute. "We pulled her out between us. She was in so much pain that she was screaming."

Mrs Martin, 29, had a four-hour operation for a badly dislocated spine while Mr Martin, 30, escaped with just a swollen ankle. Four standards of nursing in the Mexican hospital to which they were transported meant a further 12 days were added to their stay. Mr Martin had to feed and wash his wife himself. The other passengers and the pilot were unhurt. Mrs Martin's

surgeons told her that her survival was amazing.

The accident took place ten days into the couple's two-week stay when they decided to take an excursion organised with two other honeymooning couples.

Since returning to England, the couple have been treated at the King's Mill Hospital in Sutton in Ashfield where they both work. Mr Martin as an accountant and Mrs Martin as a clerical assistant.

Mr Martin said: "We have hardly had a chance to think about the wedding. It seems like a lifetime ago. We feel lucky to be alive. Vicky is still upset about the whole thing, but I have told her that at least one thing has come out of all of this: there is now a bond between us that no one can break."

Mexican authorities are investigating the accident. The balloon in which the Martins were flying was only a few weeks old and had been given a safety check. The pilot had been flying balloons for 18 years.

David and Vicky Martin booked their holiday to Puerto Vallarta through the First Choice travel firm. They were fully insured through their own company.

Balloon trips at Puerto Vallarta have been temporarily suspended by First Choice until they find what caused the Martins' balloon to break up.

Left-handers from outer space

THERE may be a good reason why left-handed people were once treated with suspicion. Their peculiarity could be a betrayal of extraterrestrial origins, according to research published today.

Scientists know that amino acids — the building blocks of life from which proteins are made — come in two molecular types, known as "left-handed" and "right-handed". For living things to function, they must be based on only one of these types: they cannot be mixed together. And on Earth, left-handed amino acids were selected.

Scientists have wondered whether

er nature picked the left-handed form at random, or whether there is something about the universe that favoured this form. Now a new study of a meteorite that landed in Australia in 1969 suggests that the origins are extra-terrestrial.

Before there was life on Earth there were amino acids, and it is believed that many were carried here by comets and meteorites. So any evidence that the amino acids found in meteorites have a preponderance of the left-handed form would indicate that the bias was set long before life began to evolve, by some force acting early in the history of the uni-

verse. Earlier examination of the Murchison meteorite have suggested that its amino acids do show an excess of the left-handed form. But this had been dismissed as the result of accidental contamination as the meteorite was studied.

In the new research, Dr Michael Engel, of the University of Oklahoma, and Dr S.A. Macko, of the University of Virginia, have examined the ratio of nitrogen isotopes in the amino acids from the Murchison meteorite and report in *Nature* that they are enriched in nitrogen-15, a clear signal of extraterrestrial origin.

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Opponents join forces against Welsh apathy

BY VALERIE ELLIOTT AND NICHOLAS WATT

JOHN PRESCOTT and William Hague both tried to invigorate the Welsh devolution campaign yesterday amid signs that apathy could be a factor in the outcome of today's referendum on the creation of a Welsh assembly.

The Deputy Prime Minister, campaigning for a "yes" vote, and the Conservative leader, calling for a "no", descended on the border town of Newport, in Monmouthshire, which has in the past shown little enthusiasm for devolution. The "yes" campaign was buoyant after a crowd cheered Mr Prescott as he told the Welsh people it was decision day and they should "go for it".

In Monmouth, Mr Hague called for a high turnout, saying: "If you still have doubts after the government hype and propaganda from their party machine, you should reject devolution." Brushing off ques-

IE OR NA

Some 2,218,850 voters are registered for today's ballot but, with a third of Welsh voters still undecided, both sides will be campaigning hard to encourage people to vote. Polling stations will be open from 7am until 10pm. Voters will be asked one question: Do you agree there should be a Welsh assembly? They must tick "yes" or "no" (in Welsh "ie" or "na").

tions as to whether his Welsh fiancée, Ffion Jenkins, shared his view, Mr Hague said: "I haven't discussed it with her. I am not entirely sure she is entitled to vote."

In North Wales, unlikely

allies are providing momentum to a vigorous campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum. Business leaders who fear an erosion of their strong links with England have found themselves on the same side as fierce Welsh patriots who dread domination by the industrialised South.

"Yes" campaigners have long feared the strength of the "no" vote in North Wales, and it was not by chance that the Prime Minister made his last campaign stop in Wrexham, near the border. "Yes" campaigners remember the 1979 referendum, when North Wales resoundingly rejected devolution.

Tony Blair's words about the economic benefits of an assembly cut little ice on the North Wales coast where business leaders look to Manchester and Liverpool, an hour's drive away, rather than to

Cardiff, four hours away. David Williams, a banker in Llandudno and chairman of the North Wales Business Club, said: "We feel an affinity with Manchester and Liverpool because of a geographical

and historical reality. That is where we look for investment and business. I fear that an assembly in Cardiff would be very biased to South Wales." Down Llandudno's promenade, a strong "no" supporter,

Silvan Jones, a retired economics lecturer who stood as a Labour parliamentary candidate in 1959, said: "The assembly is a poor version of the parliament offered to the Scots and not worth voting for. It is

an insult." But other patriots in the North will vote "yes" in the hope of unbuckling Wales from the United Kingdom. R.S. Thomas, the Welsh poet and campaigner for independence, said the assembly was

better than nothing. Speaking at his Anglesey cottage, Thomas, 84, said: "We must grasp it even though they have thrown only a few crumbs at us."

Letters, page 23



Stephen Doubler, aged 13, and other supporters of a Welsh assembly await the arrival of John Prescott in Pontypridd market yesterday

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Star school says political dogma has hit progress

By JOHN O'LEARY, EDUCATION EDITOR

ONE of the top primary schools in England accused the Government of putting political dogma above pupils' interests yesterday after it was refused permission to build larger premises despite raising half the money for the move.

Shenington Church of England School, a grant-maintained village school of 100 pupils near Banbury, in Oxfordshire, was one of only 15 to achieve the maximum score in the first primary school league tables. It has repeated the feat this summer.

The school long ago outgrew its Victorian building in the heart of the village and even a temporary building in the playground has not prevented overcrowding. But David Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, has rejected a plan to sell the site and move to a new building on the outskirts of Shenington.

A letter from the Department for Education and Employment said Mr Blunkett had rejected the £750,000 scheme on grounds of cost and because there were other primary school places available in the area. But Roger Hancock, the chairman of governors, said all the neighbouring schools were full and almost half the cost of the move was being met by the Shenington.

Mr Hancock said: "It could be the writing on the wall for the school because all the indications are that an inspection which took place last week will be critical of our facilities. If we have to cut back our intake, the school

will not be viable and everything we have achieved will be lost."

Tony Baldry, the Conservative MP, is writing to protest at the rejection and is seeking grounds for a legal challenge. "I think this is a shabby, spiteful and shameful decision. The only possible reason is that it is the only grant-maintained school in the county."

Mr Baldry added: "Shenington is about the only primary school in the area that hasn't been refurbished in recent decades. It cannot continue as it is and it has raised the money to do something about it, but now it is the victim of political dogma."

The school has four applicants to every place, but agreed not to expand significantly after church authorities and neighbouring schools lodged objections. Mr Hancock said: "We would not go beyond 110 pupils because we would worry that the ethos of the school would be lost."

Mr Hancock said: "We have a sale agreed for the school and have gone through the details in great detail with the Funding Agency for Schools. We were hoping to be able to move before the end of the school year. But now all our plans are in ruins."

A spokeswoman for the Department for Education and Employment said there was no question of political bias. "The scheme was subject to the same scrutiny as any other. We understand the governors are meeting next week and their response will be considered carefully."

Stress blamed for air errors

By HARVEY ELLIOTT, AIR CORRESPONDENT

AIR traffic controllers claim that they are being subjected to intolerable stress as they try to handle an ever-increasing number of aircraft flying into and over the British Isles.

A recent spate of potentially disastrous near-misses have been blamed on controller error, which many controllers believe, is the result of non-stop pressure at work.

"A few years ago there was a time in every day when the number of aircraft slowed down a bit," Michael Burlyn, of the Guild of Air Traffic Controllers, said. "But today, from the moment the headsets go on, it is non-stop pressure. The peak time for traffic is literally all day."

Despite breaks every two hours, controllers say that they are constantly tired and stressed although shown to be skilled and competent when subjected to official tests. Plans to ease their workload by moving the main air traffic control centre from cramped underground facilities at West

control centre at Farnham have been seriously delayed because of repeated problems with the software of the new computer equipment.

The Civil Aviation Authority said that it has set up a review of the new control centre but must ensure that existing services are maintained. A spokesman said: "We cannot undertake large-scale controller training in the busy summer months. This training will be stepped up as the traffic falls during the autumn."

Meanwhile the number of flights continues to grow. Controllers handled their millionth flight of the year on August 22 — earlier than ever before. The number of controllers has risen from 1,100 to 1,700 in the past five years to cope with extra demand.

Airlines are also aware of the increased problems on the ground and are racing to fit the latest anti-collision devices to their aircraft.

Editors promise to back privacy reform

By CAROL MIDGLEY AND RAYMOND SNOODY

NEWSPAPER editors promised yesterday to support rigorous privacy reforms and help to put an end to the "deplorable practices" by some members of the press after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

At a meeting of the Press Complaints Commission's code of practice committee yesterday, a message was read from the Princess's brother Earl Spencer calling for a privacy law and an end to the "torture" of privacy invasion.

Afterwards Sir David English, chairman of the committee, said he believed future breaches of privacy should be investigated whether there had been a complaint or not.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the PCC, who is urging moves to protect the privacy of Prince William and Prince Harry into adulthood, described the meeting as "very constructive". His proposals, which he outlined to the committee yesterday, were drawn up after discussion

with every national newspaper editor.

He added: "The paparazzi are part of the problem, in the sense that it is the conduct of photographers generally we want to put right."

"Lord Spencer's views are very well known to me. He is very concerned about these issues."

Charles Moore, Editor of The Daily Telegraph and a member of the committee, said Lord Spencer had contacted him on Tuesday and asked him to convey the message.

"The text is private but in general it emphasises the enormous public support for his attack on tabloid intrusion. It called upon us all to uphold the sanctity of privacy and in particular attacked the tabloids."

"He said that to deprive someone of their privacy is a form of torture and the tabloids were the torturers. What he hoped for was that this form of journalism would



Sir David: he called for an end to intrusion

stop. It was a very clear message."

In a statement after the meeting the committee said it was undertaking an "urgent" review of the code.

It said: "The tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales, has focused unprecedented public attention on Press intrusion, harassment and respect for privacy. As those charged with

defining the code of practice, which sets the benchmarks for the ethical and professional standards of journalism, we recognise this."

"We are now undertaking an urgent review of the code. As an industry we emphasise the need for the code to be followed not just in the letter but in its full spirit."

"We support Lord Wakeham's calls for wide-ranging and rigorous reforms and recognise that there is a shared determination to rid our publications of practices which we all deplore."

The committee, comprising six national newspaper editors, four from regional papers and one each from Scotland and periodicals.

Sources said the meeting had healed a rift between Sir David English, chairman of the committee, and Mr Moore, who had suggested that Sir David, who is also chairman of Associated Newspapers, was unfit for the post on the committee. They had argued publicly about coverage of the Princess's death and



Lord Wakeham meeting the press yesterday after the committee pledged to end "deplorable practices"

its aftermath. Sir David has told Lord Wakeham, the PCC chairman, that in future breaches of privacy should be investigated whether or not there has been a complaint.

Sir David believes that the Privacy Commissioner should have the right to choose which

cases to investigate. He said he was optimistic that, in future, there would be "a new spirit and a new attitude" in the press and that everybody now realised we have now got to get this done.

The committee's recommendations are expected to be discussed at a full meeting of the Press Complaints Commission next Wednesday. An announcement of changes to the existing code of conduct is expected within a day or two of that meeting.

Football strip blunder gave fans the blues

By DAMIAN WHITWORTH

REPLICA football kits are not cheap and those who wear them — young, obsessive small boys or slightly mad older ones — have an extraordinary attention to detail. So when Everton fans discovered that their shirts were not exact replicas of those worn by the players, they cried foul. It transpired, however, that it was the players who were sporting the wrong design.

The outcry began when it appeared, to those who can spot such things, that the stripes on the replica shirts were not the same way up as those on the players' shirts. Calls were made to the club and the manufacturer, Umbro, to complain.

There were fears that a mistake had been made in the production of the shirts, which cost about £50. The fact that a late deal with a sponsor just before the season began had delayed the arrival of the stripes in the shops made it seem all the more likely that there had been a blunder.

There had. But not with the replica shirts. Someone, somewhere had unwittingly sewn in the white and yellow

stripes upside down on the players' kit.

Umbro then faced a race against time to dress the players in the correct shirts for the rest of the season. The club said that the team would be properly attired for their clash with Barnsley on Saturday.

Among those who spotted the mistake was Robert Armstrong, 13. "He was drawing a picture of the kit when he noticed the stripe was a different way up on his," his mother, Bernadette Armstrong, said. "When you pay that amount, you expect an exact replica of what the players are wearing."

A spokesman for Umbro said: "We don't know how this happened but new shirts are being sent to the club."

Everton insisted that staff in the club's commercial department had spotted the difference even before the fans did, when the replica shirts arrived in the club's shop a week before they went on sale. A spokesman said: "Those sold to fans are the correct version. The most important thing is that Everton will be playing in the right shirts on Saturday."



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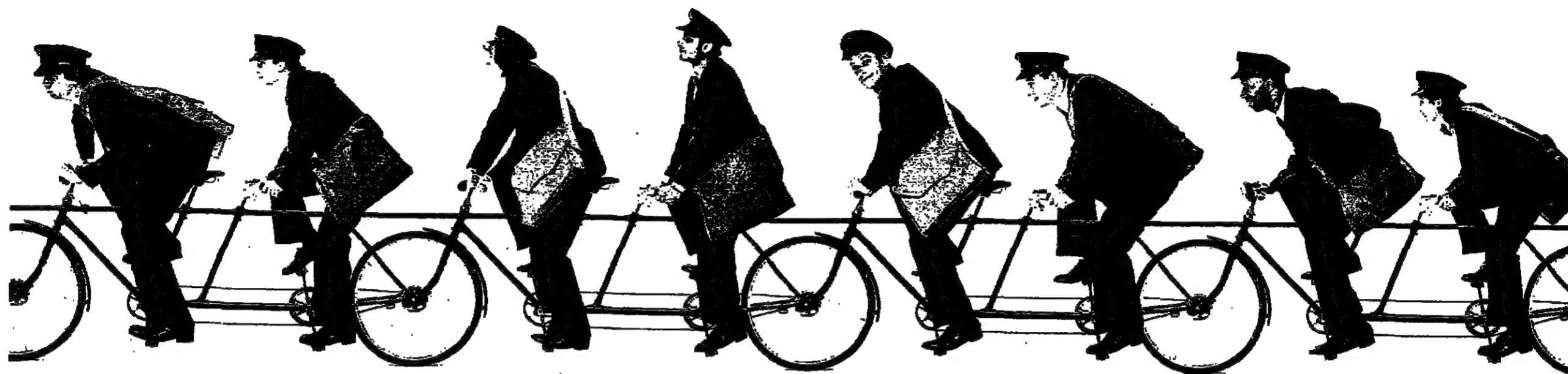
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Briton leads attempt to revive woolly mammoth

A BRITISH scientist is to search for the remains of woolly mammoths beneath the Siberian permafrost in the hope of obtaining genetic material to recreate the extinct species.

David Smale, a British geophysicist, will head an Anglo-Japanese expedition which will use ground-penetrating radar of the kind used by police looking for murder victims as they hunt for mammoths preserved for 40,000 years in the permafrost.

Kazumichi Goto, a veterinary scientist from Kagoshima University in Japan who commissioned the expedition, believes that modern genetic technology might be able to reproduce a woolly mammoth in a similar way to how dinosaurs were recreated in the film *Jurassic Park*.

Dr Goto has found that injecting DNA from the sperm of dead bulls into cows' eggs can produce viable embryos. He wants to employ the same technique to inject DNA from preserved mammoth sperm into the eggs of African elephants. Over successive gen-

Scientists believe they may be able to recreate extinct animal in Jurassic Park style, using sperm from carcass

in permafrost, reports Nick Nuttall

erations, he argues, "purer" mammoths could be bred by fertilising hybrid eggs with more mammoth sperm. The method would effectively breed out the elephant's genetic material.

News of the mammoth hunt was reported in *New Scientist*. Mr Smale, from London consulting engineers Mott MacDonald, recently returned from a preliminary trip to Siberia which was thwarted by Russian customs officials who impounded his equipment.

He hopes to return to the northeastern Siberian republic of Sakha next summer to search for mammoths in permafrost cliffs overlooking the Kolyma river. The region has yielded a number of mam-

moth finds where erosion has exposed their preserved remains.

Mr Smale said yesterday: "Mammoths turn up there with reasonable regularity. In the banks of the rivers in this area you have Pleistocene ice and permafrost dating back more than 30,000 years."

"We'll be looking between five and 20 metres under the surface, which should be well within range. Permafrost is good for radar."

The device, about the size of a lawnmower, is pulled along the ground firing radar pulses into the earth which bounce off hidden objects. The echoes are picked up by detectors on the surface to compute images showing their position.

If a mammoth is found, it

will be excavated by melting the surrounding permafrost with fires and jets of water so as not to harm the carcass. Any sperm extracted will be stored in freezers and returned to Japan.

Dr Goto will be going with Mr Smale, assisted by Peter Lazarev, a mammoth expert from the Museum of the Mammoth in Yakutsk, the nearest major city.

However, Jeremy Austin, a microbiologist from the Natural History Museum in London, who has unsuccessfully searched for DNA in prehistoric insects preserved in amber, believes they cannot succeed. "All that's left of mammoth DNA are shattered little fragments. You are never going to get enough to put all the pieces together."

Adrian Lister, a mammoth expert from University College London, said: "Everything we know about the preservation of DNA in frozen tissue suggests that it is smashed up into fragments." Of six woolly mammoths found frozen, only one found in 1903 had intact genitals.



Sperm taken from preserved mammoths will be injected into elephant eggs

Only the fittest to survive odyssey to Mars

By Nick Nuttall

ASTRONAUTS on a voyage to Mars face even deadlier perils than the explorers on Earth who braved snake bites, scurvy, head-hunters, shipwrecks and other hazards to discover new trading routes and lands.

Researchers assessing the hazards on a trip to the Red Planet have concluded that only the right kind of people would be fitted to survive the journey and the climate of Mars on arrival.

Dangers include killer cosmic rays, cancer, muscle wastage and bone loss from zero gravity, equipment failure, and the very real risk of going mad.

Scientists are busy trying to find ways to minimise the hazards as much as possible. But there is no doubt that a Mars odyssey will be one of the most dangerous feats of human endeavour ever attempted.

The dangers are outlined in the magazine *New Scientist*. The Mars mission is expected to take more than two years — six months to get there, another six to return and 18 months on the planet waiting for the next "launch window".

Cosmic rays will be a major hazard on a long flight so far from Earth. Beyond the Earth's protective atmosphere and magnetic field, atomic nuclei are shooting around like highly charged bullets.

When they strike flesh "they blow biological molecules to bits", said *New Scientist*. They also generate electrons and gamma rays when they hit anything solid.

Solar flares, thrown out by the Sun about once a year, produce huge doses of high energy protons "that would kill unprotected astronauts within hours".

To meet this danger the Mars spaceship would need a protected "storm shelter" where the crew could retreat should a flare occur.

On Mars there would be little protection from cosmic radiation afforded by the planet's thin atmosphere and weak magnetic field. The astronauts would simply have to accept the risk of cancer caused by the total doses of radiation they would be exposed to.

Just as explorers on Earth used to take for granted the risks of snake bite, scurvy, and shipwrecks, interplanetary explorers may have to accept a higher cancer risk as part of the deal, said *New Scientist*.

Beer-belly pill 'will encourage drinking'

By Ian Murray

A PILL derived from kidney beans that is claimed to stop beer drinkers developing a big belly was attacked yesterday for encouraging people to drink.

Nutri-health, which makes the herbal remedy marketed as Beer Blok, says an active ingredient in the beans hinders the body enzyme that turns excess carbohydrates into glucose and fat.

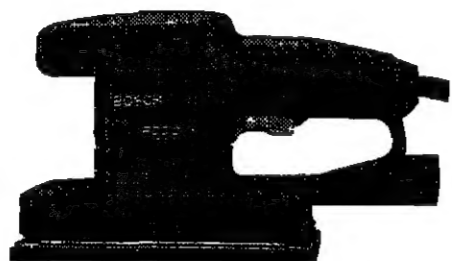
Steve Freak, managing director of the Chichester-based company, said that all a beer drinker had to do to avoid putting on weight was take a pill 15 minutes before the first pint and another before every other round. The company's trials showed that up to 80 per cent of beer drinkers who tried the pill had lost weight.

But a spokesman for Alcohol Concern said that the danger was that people who had reduced consumption because they were worried about putting on weight would think it was now all right to drink as much as they wanted.

"Putting on weight is one of the lesser dangers of drinking large amounts of beer," he said. "There are all sorts of other health risks like liver disease, heart disease and cancer, which are far more serious and this product doesn't address any of these."

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Adi Roche, Dana and Mary Banotti, whose beliefs span the spectrum of Irish life. Ms Roche is favourite to win

Women-only battle for Irish presidency

THE fight to become the next Irish President turned into a women-only battle yesterday after Albert Reynolds, the former Prime Minister, was rejected by his party in favour of a Belfast academic.

Mary McAleese, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, was the unexpected winner over Mr Reynolds in a secret ballot in Dublin yesterday for the Fianna Fail candidacy. She now takes on three other women, including Dana, the 1970 Eurovision winner, in the battle to succeed Mary Robinson, who resigned last week to become the UN Human Rights Commissioner.

The women span the political spectrum. Dana is a fundamentalist Roman Catholic staunchly opposed to abortion. Adi Roche is a politically correct anti-nuclear campaigner, whose fashionable friends include Bono, singer with the rock band U2. In between are Professor McAleese, who shares some of Dana's religious and anti-abortion sentiments, and Mary Banotti, an MEP with liberal values.

Originally from West Belfast, Professor McAleese, 46, has been secretly lobbying

The defeat of Albert Reynolds means that Ireland's next President will be female. But the candidates' views differ widely, says Audrey Magee

Fianna Fail for some months, but only formally announced her interest two weeks ago when John Hume, the SDLP leader, declined to stand. She had initially been dismissed by the party but gathered backing as the "Anyone but Albert" campaign gained pace. Fianna Fail members were increasingly worried that Mr Reynolds's campaign would be shrouded in allegations of sleaze and that, should Mr Reynolds win, the minority Government would lose a by-election.

Professor McAleese, who is married with three children, said she was "honoured and proud" to stand for Fianna Fail. Ten years ago, she stood unsuccessfully for the party in an election in Dublin. She left politics and concentrated on her academic career, becoming the first Catholic to gain a senior position in Queen's and

becoming the university's first woman pro-vice-chancellor. She studied and lived in Dublin in the 1960s when she lectured at Trinity College and succeeded Mrs Robinson as the university's Reid Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology.

She is known for her staunch Catholicism, supporting the Church's stance on abortion and divorce. But she clashed with the bishops in 1994 when revelations of widespread paedophilia in the Church came to light. Her victory surprised many in Fianna Fail. It is the first time that a former party leader has been rejected as a presidential candidate by the party.

Mr Reynolds said that he was "very disappointed" at his defeat but ruled out standing as an independent. "The party has a democratic right to

make its choice, and I will live with that," he said.

The professor's toughest opponent is Ms Roche, the 42-year-old human rights activist put forward by the Irish left-wing parties. Ms Roche is the bookies' favourite with odds of 6-4 on, compared with 10-1 against Professor McAleese yesterday.

Ms Roche is famed for her work alongside Ali Hewson, Bono's wife, on the Chernobyl Children's Project and is a former Irish Person of the Year. Bono and Mrs Hewson describe Ms Roche as "a great friend" and say they will give as much help to the campaign as possible.

The charity organises holidays in Ireland, Britain and the United States for young victims of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster. It has also dispatched hundreds of tonnes of supplies to the area.

Ms Roche, originally from Tipperary, has a strong record on humanitarian issues. She does not have the professor's intellectual strength or knowledge of constitutional law, which may place her at a disadvantage during the six-week campaign. She was nominated earlier this week by the Irish



Mary McAleese, who beat Albert Reynolds to become Fianna Fail's candidate

Labour Party and quickly backed by the Democratic Left.

Dana, 44, a mother of four, has secured the backing of four county councils to run in the election. She lives in Alabama, the heart of the American Bible Belt, where she hosts a chat show on Mother Angelica, a cable television station, and regularly

sings for the Pope. She will mount a large-scale campaign, with financial backing from anti-abortion groups in Ireland and the United States. Since August the bookies have shortened her odds of securing the presidency from 100-1 to 8-1.

Ms Banotti, 58, is standing for Fine Gael. A nurse turned politician, she is a niece of

Michael Collins, the founding father of the IRA, and sister of Nora Owen, the deputy leader of Fine Gael. She is divorced and brought up her daughter alone.

Before the nominations of the three other women, Ms Banotti was the bookies' favourite to win on October 30, but now she has been eclipsed.

Literacy deputy to head Parole Board

By RICHARD FORD
HOME CORRESPONDENT

USHA PRASHAR, deputy chairman of the National Literacy Trust, was appointed last night to be the next chairman of the Parole Board.

Ms Prashar, 49, will take up the post next month and is expected to bring the board, which considers when prisoners can be released on parole, more into the public eye. Ms Prashar has spent almost all her career working in quangos or voluntary organisations since she joined the Race Relations Board in 1971.

Insiders said yesterday that Ms Prashar's appointment to the Parole Board, which surprised some observers, was linked to the contacts she had made since serving on the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct and her membership of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice. "Membership of those bodies gave her a considerable entrée to the criminal justice system in which she is now well-connected," one source said.

Ms Prashar, who is married without children, came to this country on her own from Kenya as a schoolgirl to study for her O levels at Wakefield Girls' High School in 1964. Leaving the Duchess of Gloucester School in Nairobi and her parents behind, she lived with her late brother in Featherstone, Yorkshire.

Brenda Prashar, her sister-in-law, said: "She is a remarkable person. She arrived in this country on her own to complete her education. It was not easy for people from that background then. It was a strange situation for all of us. It was very difficult."

Within two years of arriving in this country, she was head girl of the Yorkshire direct grant school. She took a degree in political studies at Leeds University followed by a postgraduate diploma in social administration at Glasgow University.

Since then Ms Prashar has held a series of jobs and positions. One source said: "She pops up in a lot of places. Her networks are immensely good."



Prashar: expected to head board in public eye

Government fights human rights violation ruling

Decision on Ulster workers could force change of law, reports Frances Gibb

THE Government is contesting a ruling by the European Commission on Human Rights which says it has violated human rights in Northern Ireland by blocking people who are deemed a security risk from seeking redress in the courts.

The commission unanimously found that in two cases Roman Catholics who were refused public works building contracts on alleged "security risk" grounds had had their human rights breached because they had no way of challenging the decisions.

In both cases, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had issued certificates which effectively blocked the men from mounting claims that they had suffered religious discrimination.

The commission has already referred its finding to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg for a final ruling, expected next year. But in a rare move, the

Government has also referred the case to the court, indicating that it intends strongly to contest it, despite its policy to incorporate the human rights convention into law.

In recent months the Government has also referred one other case, tried to refer a second (which fell outside the time limits) and is expected to refer a third.

In the latest case, Patrick and Gerard Tinnelly and their company John Tinnelly & Sons tendered for demolition work with the Northern Ireland Electricity Services. Their tender was the lowest, but they won neither the contract nor a sub-contract.

They lodged a complaint with the Fair Employment Agency (now commission) for Northern Ireland.

The Secretary of State then issued a

certificate under section 42 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act that the decision not to award the contract had been on national security grounds, with the effect that they could not pursue their complaint.

In the second case, a contractor submitted the names of Kevin, Michael, Paddy and Barry McDuff as the people he intended to employ on contract works with the Department of Employment in Omagh, Co Tyrone, but security clearance was refused. They too made a complaint under the Fair Employment Act that the refusal of the contract was discriminatory and the Secretary of State likewise issued a certificate barring the tribunal from hearing their claim.

The Tinnellys and the McDuffs say that

the certificates denied them access to a court in violation of the European convention. The courts, they said, should be able to determine whether national security reasons had justified the refusal.

The Government claimed that the restrictions on access to a court were necessary. There was a need, it said, for confidential security vetting in public works contracts.

The contractors' cases were argued by Lord Lester of Herne Hill, QC, with the backing of the Fair Employment Commission, which is aware of 50 cases involving certificates, mostly in the public sector, since 1990. Bob Cooper, chairman of the Fair Employment Commission, said: "If the European court follows suit, we shall be looking to the Government to change the

law. We have for a very long time said that the issue of these certificates should be subject to some form of scrutiny."

The procedure was also attacked in June by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights which called for "effective judicial scrutiny of whether an act was in fact done for the purpose of safeguarding national security or of protecting public safety or public order."

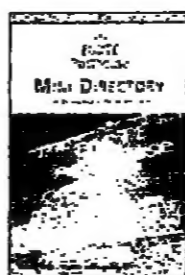
Lord Lester brought a previous successful challenge at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg when security certificates were issued to block sex discrimination claims by women part-time reservists in the RUC who were not allowed to be armed. The court held that alleged victims of sex discrimination could not be stopped from having the merits of their cases examined, even where national security was involved. The law had to be modified.

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Bottled water is overpriced con, say rivals

BOTTLED water is an expensive marketing trick and sometimes contains bacteria that make it less healthy than tap water, it was claimed yesterday.

A report from the Water Companies Association, which represents 17 privatised firms, urged the £1 billion bottled water industry to "clean up its act" by reducing prices, reviewing marketing methods and making its packaging and transportation less damaging to the environment. But the British Soft Drinks Association claimed that superior taste and quality was behind bottled water's success.

Pamela Taylor, chief executive of the Water Companies Association, described bottled water as "one of the great cons of the 20th century... It is marketing's answer to the emperor's new clothes."

But Robert Hayward, director-general of the soft drinks association, said: "Consumers buy our products because of their taste, consistency of quality and convenience."

According to the report, bottled water differs little from tap water, but consumers are

A report has called for the industry to clean up its act, reports Joanna Bale

paying "massively over the odds" for it. A litre of tap water costs, on average, 0.07p, while a litre of bottled water costs, on average, 50p. The report said there was no justification for the huge price difference.

According to the report, 66 per cent of bottled water sold in this country is still, as opposed to sparkling. In a *Sunday Times* blind tasting, experts compared five tap waters with five bottled waters. They could not tell the difference between the two: Kent tap water and Evian bottled water scored the highest marks.

The report says that tap water is more closely controlled than bottled water.

"While bacteria levels in bottled water are only regulated for the first 12 hours after bottling, bacteria levels in tap water are controlled right up to the point at which it reaches the consumer."

The report cites a survey by Leeds University last year which found that almost 2 per cent of still bottled water in supermarkets contained sufficient bacteria to fall below national standards. "Once a bottle has been opened, bacteria can grow in the water, unlike tap water, which contains minute quantities of chlorine to protect it. In health terms, leaving out an opened bottle of water is just the same as leaving out a piece of meat."

The report questions the marketing methods used to sell bottle water, with its images of health, sport, and vitality. The British Olympic Association, British Association for Sports Medicine and the British Medical Association saw no advantage in drinking bottled water.

Bottled water damages the environment more than tap water, the report claims, since most plastic bottles end up in landfill sites and are not recycled. Transporting water, particularly imported water, causes toxic fuel emissions, road congestion and noise.

Mr Hayward said that, owing to the introduction of an EU directive, standards of bottled water would improve further. Keeping up quality was expensive, as bottled water companies had to meet tough rules on extraction, hygiene and production, he insisted.

"It seems rather surprising that an industry [tap water] that has had to turn to us on more than one occasion to ensure consumers continue to receive water supplies is now criticising us. One could say that an industry that has had to deal with problems such as cryptosporidium outbreaks, pollution of water supplies from diesel, lead and nitrates, *E.coli* contamination and discoloration, to name but a few, would appear to have more than enough to keep it busy."



Tamara Berton outside the hearing: she claims she was a victim of blind racism

WPC in racism claim 'made string of errors'

By RICHARD DUCE

A JEWISH American trainee policewoman was given a "D for common sense" rating after a series of errors that led to her sacking from the Metropolitan Police, an industrial tribunal was told yesterday.

Tamara Berton was dismissed by a senior officer for trying to call in social services after a mother briefly left her three young children in her car. She was also rebuffed for making an urgent call for assistance after believing she could smell marijuana in a car she had stopped.

Mrs Berton, 50, from Soho, the first Jewish American woman to join the Metropolitan Police, is claiming unfair

dismissal on the grounds of racial discrimination. She says assessment of her work at Belgrave police station was a conspiracy to get her sacked because she was a "stereotypical, loud, brash Yank".

Georgina Kent, for the Metropolitan Police, highlighted other flaws in Mrs Berton's work which led to her dismissal in June last year. She was considered "not likely to become an efficient and well-conducted constable".

In August 1995 she failed to report that a prisoner had temporarily escaped before being recaptured during a hospital visit. Mrs Berton, who holds joint British and American nationality, was also accused by a fellow officer of falling asleep while guarding a prisoner in hospital, a claim she denied yesterday.

The tribunal heard that Mrs Berton, a divorced mother of one, also wrongly filled in a custody observation report for a prisoner who had been released five hours earlier.

Asked why she had tried to involve social services when the mother left her children in a car in Central London, Mrs Berton said: "I thought it was

terribly reprehensible. I was absolutely appalled. There were three young children, two were crying and one was a baby." Miss Kent said: "To notify social services that children were at risk — do you think that was the correct procedure?" Mrs Berton replied: "I defend my actions. I am a mother."

At a case conference called to discuss her future with the police, her senior officer gave her a B for enthusiasm but D for common sense. Miss Kent told the tribunal.

Mrs Berton, a graduate from Boston University, moved to London in 1985. She dreamt of joining the police after gaining British citizenship and started as a probationer with the force in 1994.

She has told the tribunal she became the victim of "blind racism" and one officer told her not to wear lipstick because her lips were too large. Mrs Berton said she had been the victim of a "witch hunt" where all her mistakes were picked up by senior officers who constantly monitored her performance.

The hearing in Croydon continues today.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Teenager in court over school attack

A 15-year-old boy appeared before Preston magistrates yesterday, accused of wounding Jamie Evans, aged 16, who was stabbed in a school corridor on Tuesday. The youth, who cannot be named, was released on conditional bail and is due to appear before Preston Youth Court today. He spoke only to confirm his name, age and address throughout the ten-minute hearing. Reporting restrictions were not lifted. Jamie was in a stable and satisfactory condition in Blackpool's Victoria Hospital yesterday after the knife attack.

150,000 VWs recalled

Volkswagen has recalled 150,000 cars in one of the biggest safety alerts in Britain. Dealers have called back Ventos and Golfs made between 1994 and 1997 for faulty headlamp wiring. The company's biggest recall was in May 1995, when 310,000 Golfs were ordered back to dealers because of engine overheating problems. Nearly 300,000 cars have been recalled by 12 motor companies since the beginning of July.

Motorcycle youth held

A 13-year-old boy was held by police on suspicion of being drunk in charge of a motorcycle after a head-on crash in which another boy was killed. David Tucker, 14, who had not been wearing a crash helmet, died in hospital from head injuries after he and the other youngster crashed into each other while riding scramble motorcycles in a field at Lane End, Buckinghamshire. The youth was released without charge and police inquiries are continuing.

Dakota's daughter dies

The daughter of a member of the Sixties pop band Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas died after being struck by a car near her home. Lucinda Maxfield, 9, of Stockport, near Manchester, was kept alive on a life-support machine after the accident on Monday, but her parents made the decision to switch it off 24 hours later. Her father, Mike, was the original lead guitarist in the band and is now a business lecturer at Salford University.

Family seeks lost ashes

A bereaved family have complained that they have been unable to grieve for nearly a year because Parforce lost their mother's ashes. Ivy Handel died at 75 in Brisbane, Australia, last year after emigrating there 12 years ago. Her ashes were to be scattered around the family plot in East London, but never arrived. Parforce has offered £250 in compensation, but the family have declined.

Itchy bull trips switch

A South Western Electricity Board technical team called out to trace the source of a series of power cuts that blacked out supplies to dozens of homes around the Weston-super-Mare area of Somerset discovered that a bull had rubbed through a cable while trying to scratch its back. The exposed wire came into contact with another cable, causing the power to trip.

Cash for ancient boat

A Bronze Age boat found five years ago during road excavations in Dover is to go on permanent display after the award of £953,000 from the National Lottery. The timbers of the 3,000-year-old boat have been soaked in soluble wax to strengthen them before being freeze-dried. It will be displayed in an air-conditioned gallery which has yet to be built.

Chocolate on the tracks

The sweet company Mars began its first venture into the chocolate-box market with the launch of Celebrations, a selection of miniature replicas of Mars, Snickers, Bounty and Galaxy bars and Maltesers. A train full of celebrities left London yesterday to travel the country promoting the new brand, which hopes to capture a big share of the £600 million chocolate-box market.

SLAKING YOUR THIRST IN STYLE

The most expensive bottled water is thought to be from the American designer label DKNY at £1.50 for 490ml (about £3.13 a litre).

It is described by its manufacturers as "clear and refreshing alpine spring water" from a California source. It is sold in a clear plastic bottle featuring a label with the DKNY logo and a picture of New York taxis.

There is also a nozzle to drink from rather than a screwtop. The bottles are available only at the Donna Karan shop in London.

A *Times* survey of top restaurants found that they will all serve customers tap water if requested.

A spokeswoman for Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons in Great Milton, Oxfordshire, gave a typical response: "We do not offer it unless they make a special request, but that rarely happens. We believe there is a difference in taste and quality." The restaurant charges about £2 for a large bottle of Evian or Badoit.

DKNY water comes from a California bottler who sells the same water to a supermarket chain where it retails for a fraction of the price. A DKNY spokeswoman yesterday declined to comment on how the company could justify its high charges.

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Auction at mansion untouched by time

By JOHN SHAW

THE contents of an Edwardian country house in Scotland, barely disturbed since the turn of the century, are to go on sale next week.

Ladykirk, at Monkton, near Prestwick, South Ayrshire, was built by Robert Angus, a mining magnate, in 1903. It was furnished in the height of contemporary taste and completed in 1906.

Next Tuesday and Wednesday items ranging from Edwardian straw hats to day dresses to a full-size billiard table will be auctioned on the premises for an estimated total of £300,000.

Auction-goers will be struck by the elegant interiors. Each room reflects a different style, from Chippendale to Louis XV, and Jacobean to high Victorian. All are virtually unchanged since 1906 and even the receipts for furniture have survived.

The decision to sell has come from the present generation of the family who want to move to a smaller house and scale down the family possessions. Daniel Angus said: "Although it saddens us all greatly to have to part with Ladykirk, the responsibilities of maintaining a property of this size have proved too much in recent years."

The Victorian pictures, silver and English and continental ceramics reflect a bygone era. A complete library will be sold by Phillips, including a copy of *The Peter Pan Portfolio*, a limited edition of illustrations by Arthur Rackham from 1910.

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How England tackled football's tiniest giants

Nick Nuttall reports on a kickabout where the play was simply electric

THE players do what they are told. They have no emotional problems in their private lives, and injuries can be sorted with a bit of wiring and perhaps a piece of Lego.

This is robot football, a computer-controlled game which is spawning teams at research laboratories across the world. Supporters believe that the programming of the 5cm-high players will help in the development of artificial intelligence for the defence and some electronic industries. It also gives the scientific community a chance of sporting glory.

Some of the electronic players who are the giants of robot football were in Britain yesterday from Korea for a friendly kickabout with the only English team — coached by an Open University researcher at Milton Keynes — in a warm-up for next year's world championships in Paris. No score was recorded.

"It was pretty amazing for the Koreans to come, seeing as



The miniature players with their managers. Dr Jeff Johnson and Professor Jong-Hwan Kim

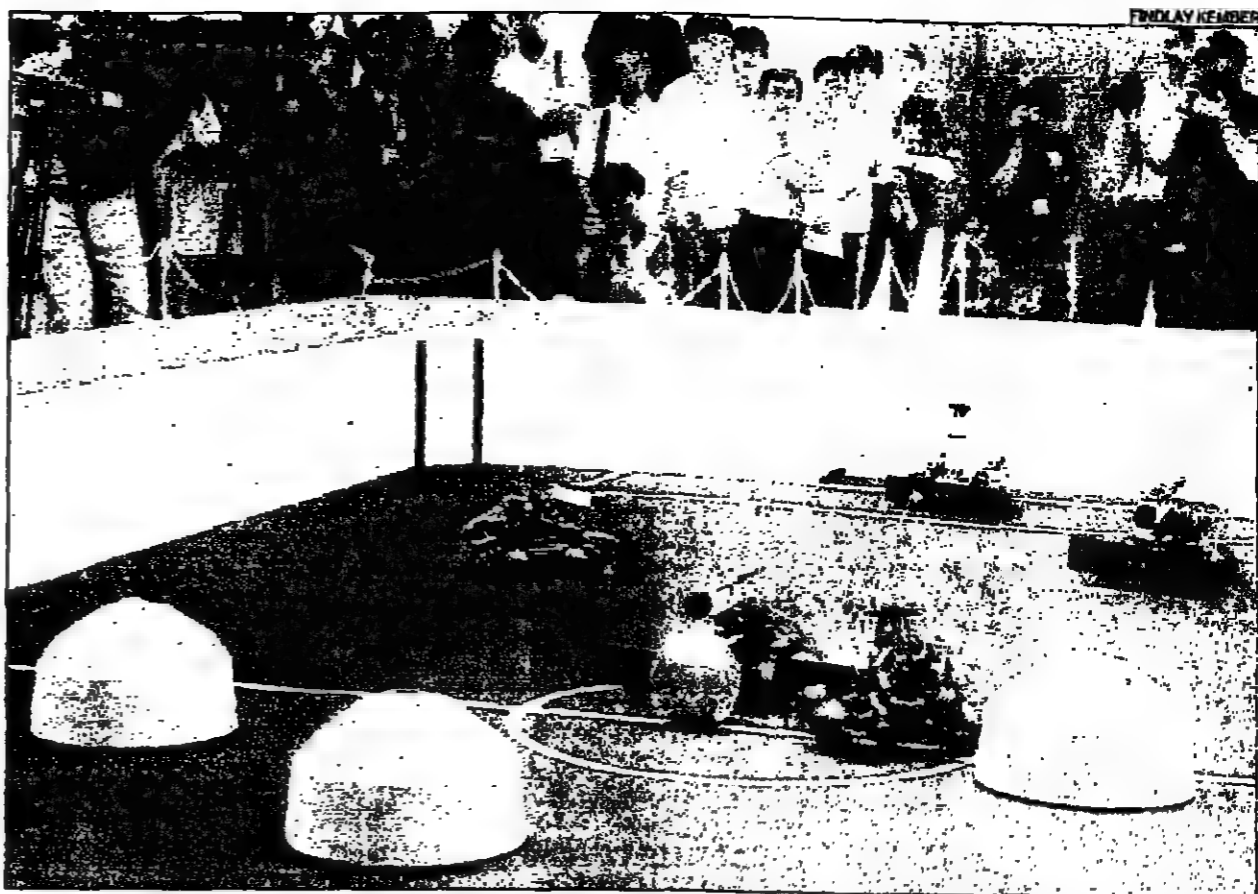
they are a bit bruised and battered after a gruelling European tour," said the English coach, Dr Jeff Johnson, showing that robot-football comments can sound similar to the full-size game, even though his players are made

from Lego. "We hope to go all the way next year." The game is played with an orange ball and each team has three players. The rules of the newly formed Federation of International Robot Football Associations allow pitches of

130cms by 90cms, with goals 30cms wide. Dr Johnson said: "The players can have arms and legs, but the limitations of the technology means that they are only cubes on wheels."

Two metres above the pitch is a camera that images the ball and the position of the squads. These are relayed to computers, one for each team. The skill of the coach is to programme strategies which are signalled to the players by a radio link, telling them where to move to hit the ball.

Dr Johnson said the game was in some ways more challenging than computer chess games that pitch grandmasters against electronic intelligence. "Robot football is much more chaotic," he said. One team hits the ball off the side of the pitch, another goes for hit and run, and a third has a developed way of getting robots to "wiggle" when taking penalties. Penalty skills are important, as robot football involves a lot of



Big match: a competition game earlier this year. Robot football is "more chaotic than computerised chess"

fouls. Colliding with an opponent's robots is a penalty, and pushing the goalie under any circumstances is not allowed. Packing the defence or the goal is also banned, and dribbling is almost impossible. "The way we play, the

robots hurt themselves at the ball and, if you are lucky, the ball goes forward. Given the constraints of the technology, it is very hard to make a robot go from A to B and kick a ball through point C." The Koreans are already developing

4cm robots, opening up the possibility of 11-a-side games. Yesterday's visiting players were the Miro and Soy teams from the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, where Professor Jong-Hwan Kim is the father of

robot football. Korean teams took second, third and fourth place in this year's world championship. It was won by the Newton Laboratories from the United States.

Human football, pages 46, 52

Murdered teacher offer is rejected

By LIN JENKINS

AN OFFER to send a team of British detectives to help to find the murderer of a British teacher bludgeoned in her home on a Caribbean island has been turned down by the Bahamian police.

A month after Carol Leach, 37, a primary school teacher, was killed by a single blow to the head, probably with the blunt end of a machete, the authorities on the island of Eleuthera have not identified her killer.

Her mother, Eve Gamson, who is back at her home in Coleford, Somerset, after sorting out her daughter's affairs, suspects she was murdered because of her vocal crusade against drugs. Mrs Gamson, 63, believes that the team of Bahamian police who flew to the tiny island, with a population of just 10,000, have made little progress and are not doing enough to find the killer.

"The drug trade is so open out there and Carol despised it. She was outspoken in her contempt for this aspect of life on the island — probably too outspoken," she said. A Bahamian police spokesman said that inquiries into the murder were continuing.

Pets killed as mink escape from farm

By A STAFF REPORTER

PET owners are being warned to keep their animals indoors after 500 mink escaped from a farm in Elland, west Yorkshire, and savaged chickens and guinea pigs.

The mink escaped after vandals cut a hole in a security fence and overturned breeding pens. The animals escaped on to nearby moorland.

More than 100 fowl were killed in an attack near a crematorium in Elland and two guinea pigs died after they were savaged. One was killed outright and the other had to be put down.

Detective Inspector Martin Jordan, of Calder Valley police, said: "Members of the public should not approach these animals. They are wild and should only be handled by professionals."

Last week a man was arrested after shots were fired at animals on the farm. Two mink were killed and others were injured.

A spokesman for the farm, which keeps 18,000 animals, said he was not sure how many mink had escaped. "We are doing as much as we can to control the situation," he said.

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Deposit	£4,120.00
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Five pit verbal skills in Preacher of the Year final

BY RUTH GLEDHILL

FIVE preachers have been chosen from a shortlist of 30 to go forward to the final of the third Times/College of Preachers Preacher of the Year award.

The three men and two women are all Anglicans. Four are ordained and just one is a lay preacher or reader. They will preach on holiness at a service at 2pm at Durham Cathedral on November 12, where entry is open to all. Their sermons will be assessed by a panel chaired by the broadcaster Joan Bakewell, and which will include the finalists from last year.

This year's finalists were picked from more than 300 entries by a panel from the College of Preachers, who assessed the original entries and then visited the 30 shortlisted preachers to hear them in their home parishes.

The shortlisted sermons will be published in *The Times Best Sermons for 1998* (Mowbray). The winning preacher will receive a £1,000 bronze of a dove by the sculptor Ros Stracey.



THE REV NEVILLE MANNING, 56, is Rector of St Leonard's, Denton, in East Sussex. "I see preaching as a pastoral activity. It is part of wanting to share things with people, to feed them and nurture them." He spends a week working on each sermon and commits them to memory.



GILL GREEN, 56, a retired teacher and a reader in the Church of England, attends St Peter's, a medieval church at Ousden near Newmarket, Suffolk. "Preaching is like telling people something they already know, but putting it in a different light. I do not like being in the pulpit. I prefer to walk around a bit."



THE REV PAUL WALKER, 34, is priest-in-charge of St Wilfrid's, Moorside, Sunderland, a new church which meets in a school. He became a Christian after trying "everything" as a teenager. "I found myself one day reading the Bible, something I had never done. I found the figure of Jesus remarkably appealing."



THE REV SALLY CHAPMAN, 42, is a team vicar in Short Heath, Willenhall, West Midlands. "I try to pick up on things that are current and relate to them. I like the opportunity to share part of my own experience and what I feel the Church is experiencing, then relating that to our experience as a community."



THE REV HARRY POTTER, 42, is a barrister who also serves as an honorary curate at St Giles, Camberwell, South London. "I found many years ago that, if I did a great deal or very little preparation for a sermon, it made no material difference whatsoever in terms of the quality of the sermon."

Christmas arrives early for church advertising drive

BY RUTH GLEDHILL, RELIGION CORRESPONDENT

WITH only 98 shopping days to go before Christmas, the country's churches yesterday launched a seasonal advertising campaign which marks a return to a traditional message of the value of church-going.

In a tongue-in-cheek attempt to claim copyright ownership of the concept of Christmas, the posters and other literature feature the copyright symbol on the word Christmas.

Heading a campaign that would cost £250,000 if 90 per cent of the work and space were not being donated free, the churches' advertising network is to cover billboards nationwide with brightly col-

oured posters promoting churchgoing this Christmas. Churches of all denominations are being urged to buy A4-sized posters for their church noticeboards to pay for the remaining £25,000 of the campaign.

The campaign represents a departure from the controversial style that brought strong criticism of last year's Christmas campaign, which used the slogan "Bad Hair Day" and featured drawings of three cartoon Magi.

This year's Easter advertising campaign was also unsuccessful and had to be withdrawn after the network ran into difficulties over whether it was entitled to use a

phrase borrowed from the *X-Files*. The latest posters promise "great singing, friendly atmosphere and something to think about" in church this Christmas. They also claim that Christmas cannot be genuine without going to church.

In an attempt to reclaim the Christmas message for the Christian Churches, the network has placed the copyright symbol © next to the word Christmas. The network defended its use of copyright law in this case, even though in legal terms a single word cannot be copyrighted, and in any case copyright expires 70 years after an author's death.

John Griffiths, of the network, who was involved in the

CHRISTMAS

GREAT SINGING FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE AND SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

The churches' seasonal poster, which claims copyright on the word Christmas

Bad Hair Day campaign and who works for a London advertising agency, said: "Copyright on Christmas has not expired because God is not dead. We are taking out copyright on Christmas in the name of Christ, who is still alive."

The advertisement was created by four advertising executives, including Nick Drummond, of M & C Saatchi, who worked on the "demon eyes" poster for the Conservative Party, which attacked Tony Blair. The churches campaign has been

restricted to the use of words rather than pictures in an attempt to keep costs down.

Mr Griffiths said: "For many years, Christmas has been too commercialised. A marker needs to be put down so that the preciousness of Christmas is preserved. In an attempt to do this in a creative and attention-grabbing way, we have decided to copyright Christmas."

The Rev Tom Ambrose, director of communications in the diocese of Ely, said: "The law of copyright protects the product of someone's skill.

creativity, labour and time. We reckon that just about sums up God's input into Christmas and, as His representatives, we are laying claim to that right."

"Christmas has been hijacked in the high street and we want to let people know that much of what they are getting in December is not the real thing. If they want a genuine Christmas, then church is the best place for experiencing it."

The posters will appear in December and be reinforced by a radio commercial.

'Baughen again' Christians keep it in the family

WHEN the congregation of St James's, Clerkenwell, intones the familiar words "In the name of the Father and of the Son", they are likely to have more on their minds than God alone, because the church is about to receive an unusual father and son ministry (Ruth Gledhill writes).

The Right Rev Michael Baughen, 67, former Bishop of Chester, will on Monday be licensed as priest-in-charge of the inner London parish. At the same service, his son, Andrew, 33, will be licensed as a priest in the parish.

Andrew, who is married with two daughters, said he has admired his father from his days as vicar of All Souls', Langham Place — Central London's leading evangelical church. He said that he and his father had different gifts to offer: "I am incredibly proud

of my dad. I will really enjoy having him around."

Although his father will not be paid, he intends to be present at the church for as many Sundays as possible, and they will share the preaching and strategy development. Bishop Baughen said: "It will be wonderful to work with my son. He has got tremendous gifts and it is a great delight to be able to learn from him."

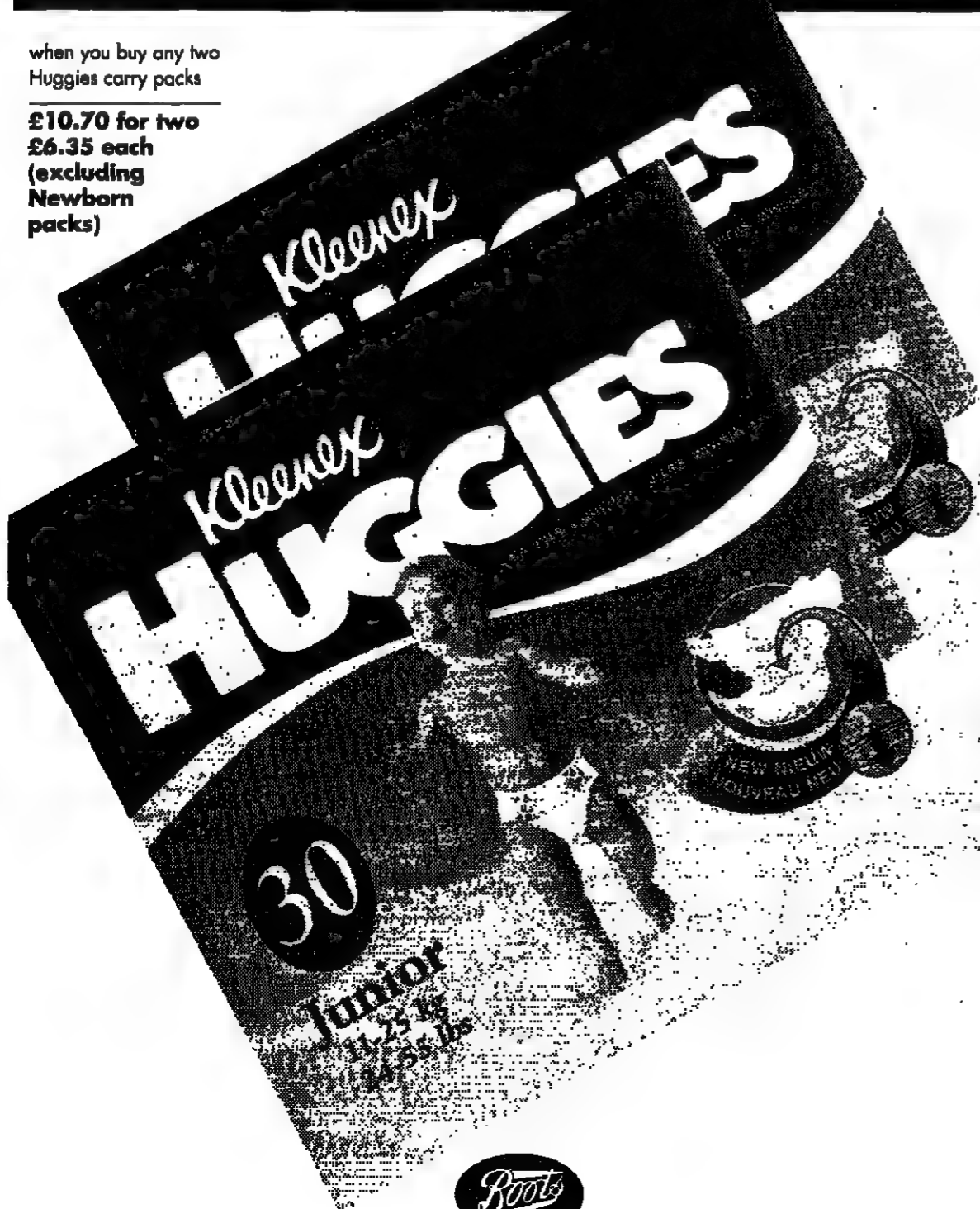
St James's, which has a congregation of 30, has been without a priest for 14 months. Andrew is moving from a curacy at St Mark's, Battersea Rise, a South London evangelical church with a congregation of 300.

Proposed changes include a Sunday morning service staged like a film set and an evening service in discussion format.

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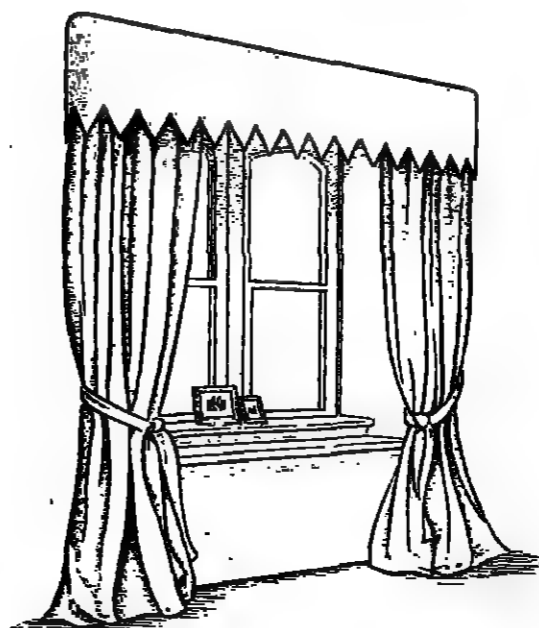
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Storm over safety in Africa's skies

THE mid-air collision of two military planes — a German Tupolev Tu154 and an American C141 Starlifter — off the Angolan coast, with the loss of 33 lives, has again dramatised the anxieties of civil airline pilots over the perilous state of air traffic safety procedures over much of Africa.

There seems little doubt these procedures were again deficient on this occasion, for it seems likely the two aircraft were never told of their nearness to each other or even that they were on the same flight path. That this was not known for certain three days after the crash highlights the problem.

Ordinarily there would be a full record of all air traffic control communications on tape, allowing an immediate and definitive confirmation as to whether such routine information was given. In this case there was a delay of 24 hours before the disappearance of the planes was announced by the two air forces after both had spent many fruitless hours trying to establish their planes' whereabouts from various

R. W. Johnson reports on pilots' fears after mid-air collision

ious African countries. Volker Rühle, the German Defence Minister, made no bones about where he felt the blame lies. "Air safety in Africa has to be improved," he told a press conference. "Our military transport planes have never had an accident in 40 years. There were no safety deficits on our part."

Aviation safety in Africa is bound to be a key issue when the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations meets in Ghana this week, because both it and especially its South African chapter, Alpa-SA, have spoken repeatedly about the dangerous neglect of air safety procedures, particularly in the western part of the continent. This time it seems likely the Angolan authorities may be at fault.

In July, Alpa-SA said that last year Angolan air traffic controllers had reported 12 near-misses in their airspace.

Aviation sources say many such incidents go unreported and the real figure is likely to be far higher, particularly when the number of non-IATA (International Air Transport Association) planes in the air over the continent is taken into account.

The problem, according to the international pilots' federation, is that the overflight fees paid by airlines, about £4,000 for each Johannesburg to Europe flight, are pocketed by African countries which do not spend it on training or equipment as they are supposed to. So desperate have South African Airways pilots become about the virtual non-existence over Africa of the radar, waypoints, beacons, airfield safety facilities and air traffic control communications prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation that there has recently been talk of its aircraft again flying

round the bulge of Africa, as it did in apartheid days when sanctions forced such a route.

The problem is that International Civil Aviation Organisation standards are not compulsory, a fact that has caused some airlines to threaten the withholding of overflight fees or, in the case of South African Airways, to offer to pay the fees in kind by installing the necessary equipment in countries that lack it.

The only other means of pressure available would seem to be the expulsion of African countries from the International Civil Aviation Organisation or their airlines from IATA.

In practice, airlines are reacting to the danger by installing more and more anti-collision equipment and radars on board planes, although pilots say that reliance on such in-plane equipment is analogous to road safety being regulated by car horns rather than traffic lights, white lines, cats' eyes and highway codes.

Leading article, page 23



Two survivors of the UN helicopter crash in central Bosnia on their way to a Nato military hospital in Sarajevo. Twelve people perished in the accident

Crash in fog kills 12 on UN helicopter

FROM TOM WALKER IN BELGRADE

THE international community's second most senior negotiator in Bosnia was killed yesterday, along with 11 others, in a helicopter crash in the centre of the country. A Briton was reported among the dead.

Cerd Wagner, 55, a German diplomat with extensive Balkan experience, was deputy to Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative. He took up the post in July. Diplomats said Charles Morphet, the Briton killed, had served as an army liaison officer in the Foreign Office before transferring to the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia at the start of the year. He had recently married, they said.

The United Nations in Sarajevo confirmed yesterday afternoon that a Russian-made Mi-8 transport helicopter carrying Herr Wagner and other senior personnel had crashed 30 miles northwest of Sarajevo in the Fojnica mountain range. The helicopter, leased to the UN, had four Ukrainian crew.

Speaking at a news conference in Bonn, Klaus Kinkel, the German Foreign Minister, said a total of five Germans were killed in the accident, five Americans, a Briton and a Pole. "We are deeply affected by this tragic accident," he said.

The Ukrainians, including the pilot, were believed to be the only survivors of the crash, he added.

Herr Kinkel said the helicopter hit a mountain after emerging from a fog bank. It had taken off from Sarajevo in good weather conditions at about 0.15am but had then run into thick fog. "The pilot ran into the fog bank, came out of it, and then immediately flew into a cliff," the minister said.

Fighter accidents halt training flights

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

THE Pentagon last night ordered a 24-hour halt to all military training flights after the night-time collision of two F16 fighter jets above the Atlantic Ocean, the fifth crash involving US military aircraft in as many days.

In a directive issued by William Cohen, the US Defence Secretary, the heads of the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps were instructed to ground training sorties for the duration of a swift safety review. Operational

flights would continue, Mr Cohen said. The orders came after an accident late on Tuesday night when the two fighters, carrying pilots training for night-time flying, collided just minutes after take-off from the local National Guard base. Two men were forced to parachute into the ocean and a third to nurse his crippled plane back to land. All three pilots were safe yesterday.

The incident came seven months after another mishap involving two F16s from the 177th Fighter Wing in which the jets tailed a civilian aircraft so closely that the passenger plane took emergency evasive

action. This week, however, has seen a spate of accidents. On Monday, a Marine FA18 Hornet fighter crashed off the North Carolina coast, killing both pilots.

A Navy FA18 fighter crashed in Oman on Sunday. The pilot also died. On the same day, an F117A Stealth fighter plunged to the ground during an airshow in Maryland. Its pilot ejected safely.

Details remain sketchy of a crash on Saturday in which a C141 Starlifter cargo plane is thought to have collided with a German military aircraft off the coast of Africa. Of the 33 people feared killed, nine were Americans.

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► REWARDING TIMES ◀

PLAY PORTFOLIO
£200,000 TO BE WON

£2,000 TO BE WON TODAY — TURN TO THE EQUITY PAGE 33

This week we launch new Portfolio, an exciting opportunity to play the stock market without getting your fingers burnt. You can win £2,000 a day six days a week in *The Times*, and you can play every Sunday in *The Sunday Times* to win £5,000. Better still, there is a £10,000 weekly prize, if you play Portfolio in both papers, seven days a week. Your gamecard was inserted in Tuesday's *Times* and another will be inserted on Monday, September 22. Playing Portfolio is easy and fun. Every week companies' share prices go up and down in the real world of the Stock Exchange. So you can experience the excitement of the stock market swings, but without taking any risks.

Yesterday's winner, Mr Richard Boyes, 37, a civil servant, of Enfield, Middx, won £2,000.

HOW TO PLAY

- On each individual Portfolio gamecard there are eight numbers printed in a grid. (See example, above)
- These numbers represent eight out of 44 companies listed on the Portfolio panel (see Equity Prices, page 33).
- The eight are your "Portfolio of Shares".
- The 44 companies are taken from the hundreds whose shares are listed on *The Times* Equity Prices page every day.
- Simply check the share price movement (+ or -) of your eight Portfolio shares.
- When you have checked all eight share movements and entered them on to the Portfolio panel on page 33,



add them up to obtain your plus or minus total.
● When adding up your total, ignore fractions, ie enter 16½ as 16 (the symbol ... equals no change).
● If your overall total exactly matches the points required in the Daily Portfolio Dividend, printed on the Portfolio panel on page 33, you win or share the £2,000 daily prize.

WEEKLY ACCUMULATOR GAME

The weekly accumulator game starts in *The Times* on Monday, September 22. To play the weekly accumulator game you simply add up your daily Portfolio totals, Monday to Sunday. If your accumulator total matches exactly the weekly portfolio accumulator dividend, published in the *Sunday Times*, you win or share the weekly accumulator prize of £10,000.

HOW TO CLAIM YOUR PRIZE

Claims for *The Times* daily Portfolio dividend must be made to the Portfolio claims line on 0171-481 3388 between 9.30am and 3pm today. No claims can be accepted outside these hours and you must claim your prize the day you win. You must have your card with you when you claim. Other persons can claim on your behalf provided they have your card. No responsibility can be accepted for failure to contact the claims office for any reason within the stated hours. In the event of more than one valid claim for any prize, that prize will be divided equally among the winners.

*You can get a Portfolio card by calling the card request line on 0171-481 3385 during normal office hours. There will be another gamecard in *The Times* on Monday, September 22, and cards are also available at selected newsagents.

THE TIMES

WORLD SUMMARY

Iranians shot in Pakistan

Guns on a motorcycle, almost certainly Sunni Muslim extremists, shot dead five Shia Iranian air force technicians and their local driver in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi yesterday (Christopher Thomas writes). One person was wounded.

Religious divisions pose an increasing threat to the Islamic state, whose class, political and economic conflicts mean it is a country struggling for survival.

DNA tests for 'The Fugitive'

New York: The body of Dr Sam Sheppard, whose case inspired the long-running television show *The Fugitive*, was exhumed for DNA tests in an attempt to establish that he did not kill his wife (Tunku Varadarajan writes). He was convicted in 1954 of murdering his wife, Marilyn, and spent a decade in jail before winning his freedom in a retrial. He died in 1970.

Free French war hero dies

Paris: The Allies lost one of their most courageous war heroes this week. French Brigadier-General Georges Berge, a Colditz survivor and the first Allied secret agent to be parachuted into Nazi-occupied France as part of de Gaulle's Free French forces, died on Sunday in France at the age of 88. (Susan Bell writes)

Troops patrol riots capital

Jakarta: Soldiers and police patrolled the South Sulawesi capital of Ujung Pandang, still hit by sporadic violence on the third day of anti-Chinese unrest in which at least six people have died, residents said. "Mobs are still pecking houses and shops," one said by phone. (AFP)

Swiss miffed at howl in wall

Geneva: Residents of the Swiss village of Bernex, on the outskirts of Geneva near the French border, asked authorities to have an automated cash dispenser removed because of noise, claiming overuse by non-residents. (Reuters)

Soldiers in drag battle for Congo capital

FROM SAM KILEY IN KINSHASA

HELICOPTERS strafed the already shattered streets of Brazzaville yesterday with rockets and cannon fire as fighting between government troops and militias in drag escalated in a final push for control of the city.

After the helicopters made leisurely sorties across Brazzaville killing inhabitants too old or ill to flee with other civilians, witnesses across the Congo River saw one aircraft hit and plunge to the ground in a plume of black smoke.

Aid workers said that the troops had copied images from the Liberian civil war and had started to dress up in looted wigs and women's clothing, with garish make-up. One foreigner who left the city recently said he had been held up at a roadblock by a militiaman "in full Father Christmas kit" - including a long white beard.

Brazzaville's largely forgotten war is between forces of President Lissouba and the former Denis Sassou-Nguesso, leader of the "Cobra" militia, which has claimed thousands of lives and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes since June. The conflict has escalated since another militia leader, Bernard Kolelas, the Mayor of Brazzaville, joined forces with the Government this week, dragging his

Bakongo district into a maelstrom which locals said was "getting madder by the day". The only sources of aid to Brazzaville's residents have been the International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins sans Frontières. Their officials said there was not a major humanitarian crisis yet, as most civilians had fled to their home areas. But food supplies are expected to be exhausted with the approach of the rainy season.

More damaging has been the collapse of order among young fighters. The militias metamorphosed into voodoo armies beyond the control of their officers further undermined attempts to broker a peace agreement between the rival politicians who ignored a ceasefire plea from regional leaders to unleash three days of artillery bombardments.

Nearby Kinshasa has become used to the background sound of artillery. Many residents of the capital of the former Zaïre peer across the river and compare the skills of the gunners on the two sides. The shooting down of the helicopter from Mr Lissouba's army was followed by direct hits on the Nambemba Tower building, the headquarters of Elf-Aquitaine. Mr Lissouba has previously accused Elf of giving finance to General Sassou-Nguesso.

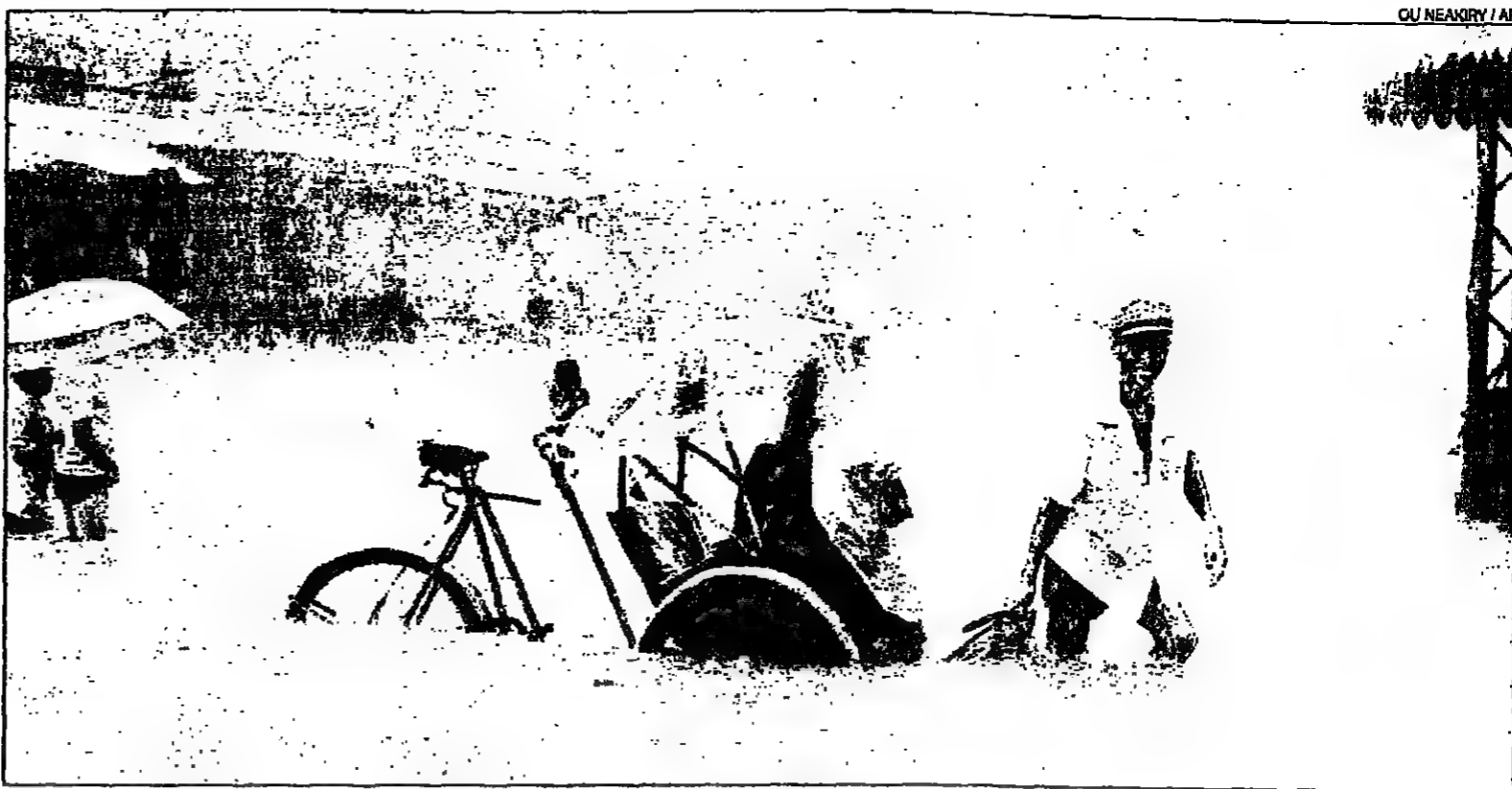
Kabila clash with UN threatens foreign aid

LAURENT KABILA, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was set yesterday for a clash with Kofi Annan over his refusal to allow United Nations investigations into widespread allegations of massacres (Sam Kiley writes). The clash could jeopardise badly needed foreign funding for the country.

Mr Annan, the UN Secretary-General, is expected to pull a team of 24 investigators out of the former Zaïre this week if the Congolese President refuses to allow them to deploy without "minders".

Mr Kabila, who took power with the help of Tutsi soldiers from Rwanda who continue to dominate his army, is anxious to preserve good relations with his eastern neighbour, whose troops are alleged to have slaughtered thousands of Hutu refugees. Reliant on the Tutsi fighters to keep him in power, he looked determined this week to sacrifice foreign support which is likely to be cut drastically if the UN investigation is closed.

"The backlash would be disastrous for the Congo," a European ambassador said.



A cycle cab driver is reduced to dragging his fare as heavy rains flooded the streets of Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital, yesterday

Sherry barons staggered by 'hangover-free' fino

FROM GILES TREMLETT IN MADRID

SORE-HEADED Spanish sherry producers are reeling from the appearance of what its inventor claims is the world's first hangover-free fino.

Jose Estevez's Tio Mateo fino should have encouraged citizens of Jerez de la Frontera to drink all night and dance all day. Instead it has produced one of the biggest headaches in the town's history.

The aristocratic families who run most of the town's centuries-old sherry bodegas say the claims being made for

the hangover-free upstart are grossly exaggerated. They refuse to accept the implication that ordinary sherry can be anything but good for you.

The town's Sherry Council has refused Señor Estevez permission to advertise the special properties of Tio Mateo on the bottle labels.

Señor Estevez says the secret to his fino's hangover-reducing properties lies in its low histamine levels. Histamine is blamed for many of the worst effects of hangovers, producing violent headaches, diarrhoea and even provoking asthma and allergy attacks.

A self-made millionaire, Señor

Estevez has ploughed a large part of his fortune into the bodega he bought 20 years ago. But he says the old families have turned their backs on him. He blames his background as the son of a local labourer who quarried sand for wine bottles. "It is the old boy network that counts here," he said.

Señor Estevez claims his attempt to convert his fellow townsmen to the new fino are also being blocked by multinational drinks companies afraid of his success. "I have been the David to the Goliath of the multinationals," he says.

Six years of work with Germany's

Underberg winery, which also produces low histamine wines, has allowed him to perfect a technique for ridding sherry of the potentially damaging substance. Ordinary sherry contains up to 11mg per litre. Tio Mateo has less than 0.02mg.

But the Sherry Council refuses to recognise that low histamine necessarily makes a drink less liable to produce a hangover. It says histamine levels are even higher in many foodstuffs, such as cheese, strawberries and yoghurt. "Scientific opinion differs," sniffs one rival. "What really matters is the amount of the stuff you drink."

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Rounded Architrave 15mm x 45mm x 2.1m. Pack of 8. **£19.49** per pack

Torus Skirting 15mm x 119mm x 2.4m. Pack of 4. **£17.97** per pack

Torus Architrave 17mm x 59mm x 2.1m. Pack of 6. Was £14.99. **KEY season PRICE £13.49** per pack

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Burbidge Ornamental Mouldings Selected design from range as shown. 21mm x 36mm x 1.83m. Was \$15.99. **£13.99**

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Colonial 6 Panel Grained Pine Internal Door 78ins x 30ins. **£23.49**

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KEY season PRICE **£31.99** per pack

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America rejects global ban on landmines

AMERICA refused to sign an international treaty banning landmines agreed by 89 nations in Oslo yesterday. Eric Newsum, head of the American delegation, said the conference had refused to accept an American compromise formula that met Washington's security concerns.

He hailed the completion of the Canadian-sponsored treaty banning the use, storage or manufacture of all anti-personnel mines, and said it was a "significant accomplishment". But it would have been a much stronger treaty had the negotiators taken steps so that the US could have joined. President Clinton, attempting to limit criticism of his rejection of a global landmine treaty, last night announced a series of unilateral measures by America designed to show its commitment to a worldwide moratorium. Speaking in the Oval Office, he said America could not sign up to a draft treaty that did not accept the unique responsibilities of the world's only superpower.

"Unfortunately, as it is drafted, I cannot, in good conscience, add America's name to that treaty," Mr Clinton said. "There is a line I simply cannot cross which is the safety and security of our men and women in uniform. But America will continue to take the lead in ending the use of landmines."

The sticking point was America's demand to be allowed to keep mines deployed along South Korea's border with North Korea. The Pentagon has argued forcefully that, with the unstable situation in the Communist North and hundreds of thou-

The defence of South Korea is sticking point, write Michael Binyon and Tom Rhodes

sands of North Korean troops deployed very close to the border, removal of the mines would increase the risk of invasion.

America demanded a nine-year exemption for Korea, and also wanted to keep "smart" anti-personnel mines that self-destruct so that they could be deployed to protect anti-tank mines. It also wanted countries to be allowed to withdraw from the treaty, after six months' notice.

Swayed by the forceful rejection of these arguments by Lloyd Axworthy, the Canadian Foreign Minister and instigator of the Ottawa Process on landmines, delegates rejected the American proposals. They argued that other countries would argue for similar exemptions.

America initially refused to take part in the Ottawa Process, but then relented in response to world opinion. The campaign for a ban, powerfully boosted by Diana, Princess of Wales, led President Clinton to accept the principle. But over the past two weeks the Americans have twice changed their minds on whether they would accept a

total ban. They have until December to sign. Mr Newsum said America would announce its final position in the next day or so.

Mr Clinton said he had directed the Pentagon to develop alternatives by 2003 and that landmines would be withdrawn from the demilitarised zone between the two Koreas three years later.

Appointing a former senior military official as his personal adviser on the issue, Mr Clinton also pledged \$68 million (£42.5 million) towards demining efforts throughout the world, starting in Chad, Zimbabwe and Lebanon, and urged a 25 per cent increase in that figure starting next year.

Neither Russia nor China was present in Oslo, although Moscow has already declared a moratorium on the sale and use of mines. China is the main manufacturer of the cheap mines increasingly used by insurgents and guerrillas in the Third World. It is estimated that every year they kill or maim 26,000 people.

Under the terms of the treaty, each country must destroy all stockpiles by 2005, including all mines deployed on its territory. In theory Britain must remove all mines laid by the Argentinians in the Falklands, though this would depend on improving clearance technology in boggy land. In December, Canada will launch the second stage of the Ottawa Process, which will deal with verification, mine-clearing technology and Western help for war-torn countries where reconstruction and agriculture must wait until the land has been cleared of mines.



Governor Pete Wilson examines an M16 assault rifle yesterday with Commander Rick Dinse, centre, and Lieutenant Anthony Alba

LA gun law puts heat on robbers

Assault rifles boost police arsenal as criminals echo film violence, writes Giles Whittell in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES has raised the stakes in America's inner-city arms race by issuing its police with 600 M16 assault rifles as a defence against the region's increasingly ruthless bank robbers, whose sense of reality, some say, has been distorted by crime films.

The weapons, designed for storming heavily armed enemy positions in time of war, will be assigned to senior patrol officers for use at their discretion. Pete Wilson, the California Governor, said yesterday.

His announcement fulfilled a promise to boost the Los Angeles Police Department's firepower after a shoot-out in February, in which officers were pinned down for several hours by two gunmen bristling with assault weapons who had robbed a bank.

The "battle of North Hollywood", as it was dubbed, was broadcast live on national television. It ended in the deaths of both robbers, but only after police improvised by running to a nearby gun store to borrow heavy, rapid-fire weapons.

The harrowing episode had uncanny echoes of scenes from the violent Michael Mann thriller, *Heat*. "Never, ever again do I want to see officers from the Los Angeles Police Department outgunned," said Mr Wilson, a former Marine who made law enforcement at all costs a plank of his 1994 re-election campaign.

"Never, ever again do I want to see them having to rush to a gun shop in order to be able to equalise the firepower of the thugs." As he

spoke, police were sealing off another northern Los Angeles neighbourhood after a gun battle between security guards and a carload of masked robbers had left one dead and three missing.

The violence erupted soon after the 9am opening of a Van Nuys branch of the Great Western Bank in the San Fernando Valley. The two plainclothes guards opened fire on the robbers after seeing them pull out a handgun in a car outside the bank's rear entrance.

At least 12 shots were exchanged between the

guards and a man brandishing a 9mm machine pistol, who died at the scene of gunshot wounds.

In contrast to the North Hollywood robbery, in which 11 police and six civilians were wounded, no one else was injured.

The incident highlighted the escalating danger in some Californian neighbourhoods of brazen armed robberies, carried out in daylight by a grimly lethal breed of latter-day outlaw — but little emphasis was needed.

As other forms of violent crime dip, Los Angeles has become known to the FBI in

recent years as the "bank robbery capital of the world". Police frequently respond to as many as four hold-ups a day, many of them in the San Fernando Valley, which forms the city's vast northern lobe and boasts several contrasting distinctions, including the world's largest car showroom, dozens of pornography studios and thousands of desirable hillside homes.

The bank targeted yesterday has been robbed twice before, in April and July last year, a spokesman said.

The gunmen killed in February's shootout were like-

wise veterans of the city's bank robbery industry. Larry Phillips and Emil Mataraneanu were posthumously linked to two unsolved robberies, which were thought to have netted them up to \$1.7 million (£1,090,000), and two armoured car hijacks which experts likened to the opening sequence of *Heat*, in which a van carrying millions of dollars is caught in a deadly ambush.

Even in the more salubrious neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, bank visits by armoured vans are now tightly choreographed events featuring grim-faced guards with drawn weapons. Every second is filmed by security cameras and passers-by are wise to pause until the van departs.

The North Hollywood shootout brought new demands from gun-control advocates as well as police.

Two Democratic state senators, including Jane Fonda's former husband, Tom Hayden, called for new laws to close loopholes in the federal ban on assault weapons.

Russian and Chinese-made AK47s, the weapons of choice of most robbers, are still easily obtained on the black market.

Designed in 1947 and for decades the Soviet Army's chief assault rifle, they are often smuggled into the US with small five-round ammunition clips, then modified to take 75-round drums.

The newer M16, properly used, will pound most AK47 users into submission. It can fire 800 rounds per minute and is accurate to nearly half a mile.



Robert De Niro, left, and Val Kilmer in the film *Heat*, later imitated in real life

Marine who evaded Vietnam duty arrested after 30 years

FROM TOM RHODES IN WASHINGTON

ALMOST 30 years after he evaded the draft to Vietnam, a US Marine was yesterday under close arrest at a Californian army base as the Pentagon considered whether to charge him with desertion.

Randy Caudill, 48, was arrested at the northern border of Washington State as he attempted to return to Canada, his home since 1968.

A routine check by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service had found a warrant for desertion from the Marine Corps and Mr Caudill was flown to Camp Pendleton near San Diego, the base where he had trained as a radio operator before refusing the call to arms.

He was 19 at the time. The year had begun with the bloody Tet offensive, the aeri-

al bombing of Hanoi and the siege of the Marine base at Khe Sanh. Angry anti-war protesters had taken to the streets of America and bitter divisions over the war had driven President Johnson to abandon re-election.

The United States this year sent an ambassador to Hanoi for the first time since the fall of Saigon and, perhaps most tellingly, Bill Clinton, an anti-Vietnam activist who evaded the draft, resides at the White House. But Mr Caudill nevertheless could face a maximum of five years in prison for desertion.

Although an amnesty was granted during the Carter Administration, it covered only those who had fled to Canada to avoid military service, not military personnel

who had deserted. Sent on holiday before his troop was deployed to Vietnam, Mr Caudill had spent a week with his family in Ohio and then, like so many others of his generation, chose to flee to Canada.

A resident of Winnipeg, Mr Caudill is married and has three daughters and two granddaughters.

Marine Corps officials were yesterday considering what charges to press against the former soldier. "The Marine Corps takes this very seriously," said Captain Scott Lopez, an official at Pendleton.

As Vietnam was not declared a war by Congress, the prospect of the death penalty enforced for desertion in time of a conflict was not considered an option.

Clinton spurns \$368bn tobacco deal with call for tougher action

BY TOM RHODES

PRESIDENT CLINTON rejected a \$368.5 billion (£231 billion) tobacco settlement yesterday, concluding that the deal did not meet his ambitious goal of drastically reducing smoking among children.

Announcing his verdict on the settlement, made public in June after almost 90 days of negotiation between the tobacco industry and the attorneys-general of 40 states, Mr Clinton demanded tougher ac-

tion by Congress to achieve bipartisan national tobacco legislation.

He called for sharply increased penalties on cigarette makers if they did not meet targets to reduce the number of young smokers within a decade. The President said that, if all the penalties were imposed, the price per packet of cigarettes should rise by as much as \$1.50, more than double the estimated increase under the original proposal.

"This is not about money," Mr

Clinton said during an Oval Office announcement. "It is about fulfilling our responsibility as parents and as responsible adults. This is about changing the behaviour of the United States." Rather than deliver a point-by-point critique of the huge deal, Mr Clinton outlined issues to be addressed by new legislation which he said would seek to resolve the industry's legal and regulatory problems.

The White House refusal to endorse the plan, initially designed

to place 25 years of restrictions on smoking in exchange for well defined limits on cigarette manufacturers' liability in legal actions, effectively drained the proposal of its little remaining momentum.

It certainly removes any possibility that a deal, albeit in amended form, could come before Congress before its adjournment at the end of next month or the beginning of November. No action is expected before next year.

Apart from the increase in packet

prices, Mr Clinton said that any new settlement must give the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) more power over the control of nicotine. He said the tobacco industry should be held more accountable, offered the strongest possible incentives and urged to bring a voluntary end to cigarette advertising that targeted children.

Walking a careful political tightrope, and once again promoting Vice-President Al Gore as his negotiator-in-chief, Mr Clinton

said any new Bill crafted by Congress should protect farmers in the tobacco-rich Southern states.

His announcement was greeted with elation by anti-smoking forces which have been arguing with the White House that the original settlement ceded too much to the industry and did not hold makers accountable for their apparent knowledge of nicotine addiction.

Hailed by the attorneys-general as an historic achievement, the deal had contained an impressive array

of anti-smoking measures, including protections against secondary smoke, severe limitations on advertising and huge payments to reimburse states for smoking-related healthcare costs.

A White House task force concluded last week, however, that the deal limited the authority of the FDA and would fail to achieve the stated goal of reducing smoking by young people by at least 30 per cent in five years and double that figure in a decade.

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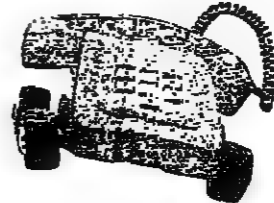
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JOSE MIGUEL GÓMEZ / REUTERS

'Pot' shot fired by Jospin's loosest cannon

FROM BEN MACINTYRE IN PARIS

DOMINIQUE VOYNET, the outspoken French Environment Minister, has called for legalisation of cannabis and admitted smoking marijuana herself in an interview that will embarrass Cabinet colleagues and confirm her reputation as the loosest cannon in the Government.

This week Mme Voinet, head of the French Green Party, replied "Yes" when asked by the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* whether she had smoked "joints".

The interviewer, François Camé, then asked if she still smoked marijuana. Mme Voinet responded with an emphatic, if ambiguous, French expletive to sidestep the question. "Merde," said the Environment Minister.

A medical doctor, Mme Voinet insisted that the occasional use of cannabis had "no effect on health and social relations" and should be legalised. "I have always been in favour of legalisation... I am more concerned by the number of people who need sleeping pills than the number who confess to having smoked a joint," she said.

Mme Voinet was brought into the Cabinet after the victory of an electoral coalition of Socialists, Communists and Greens. The election marked the first time that the environmentalists had won seats in parliament.

Mme Voinet's views on cannabis, which have not been backed by the rest of the Cabinet or Lionel Jospin, the

Prime Minister, represent a stark departure from the policy of the previous Government, which promised a crackdown on drugs and criticised The Netherlands for its liberal policies.

In the short life of the left-wing Government, Mme Voinet has emerged as the minister most likely to provoke controversy. After the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, she said she did not understand the level of emotion aroused and said the accident should be put "into perspective".

Mme Voinet's remarks on legalising drugs are likely to put further strain on the ruling coalition. An annual rally in support of legalising drugs, backed by the Greens, was cancelled by the Paris prefecture earlier this year, with the approval of the Interior Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement.

Compounding the Government's uncertainty on the issue is the fact that Bernard Kouchner, the Health Minister, is a signatory to a petition calling for the legalisation of cannabis. During the election campaign, M Jospin admitted that drug laws dating back to 1970 needed urgent revision. "Far from preventing drug addiction, the law only aggravates a problem that should be examined in the light of the experiences and policies put into effect by our neighbours."

Confirming her reputation for shooting from the hip, on Tuesday Mme Voinet accused the national nuclear reprocessing company, Cogema, of violating safety rules. After a complaint by Greenpeace, she said the company had broken security regulations during a clean-up operation in the plant at La Hague, on the Channel near Cherbourg. The minister said the cleansing operation would be resumed "only when total confinement is assured", and promised a police report.

Allegations of high radioactivity levels around the plant earlier this year prompted her to issue an immediate ban on fishing, sailing and swimming in the vicinity in advance of an official safety report.



A plane sprays herbicide on a Colombian illegal poppy crop. It was later hit by gunfire, allegedly from guerrillas, and the pilot was slightly injured in one foot

British minister sees gun attack on anti-drugs plane

BY VICTORIA FLETCHER



Illegally grown poppies being shown to Arthur Colman, the British Ambassador, centre, and Tony Lloyd

TONY LLOYD, the Foreign Office Minister for Latin America and Africa, witnessed the Colombian drug war at first hand when a plane spraying herbicide on a poppy crop was fired on only minutes after he had landed in the jungle.

The aircraft came under fire while destroying an illegal poppy plantation on Tuesday. Mr Lloyd watched as the plane and its pilot were hit. Two Colombian military helicopter gunships were called in to return the fire and to escort the crop sprayer to the ground, where the pilot was treated for an injured foot.

Using chemical defoliation sprays is often the most effective way to destroy the drug plantations on the borders of the Huila and Cauca provinces of southeast Colombia, but low-level flying makes the aircraft easy targets for left-wing rebels below.

The Foreign Office said that Mr Lloyd was not in any direct danger. "The minister

was unperturbed by the incident and continued with his visit," an official said. He added that the event would not alter the minister's itinerary for the visit, which has included talks with President Samper about Colombia's efforts to combat the drugs traffickers. "Drugs barons are a huge problem in Colombia; we are there to talk to the Government about these issues and we will continue to do so." The official said that the incident would not distract Mr Lloyd's attention from other important issues discussed with the President, covering human rights and especially Britain's future trading interests.

This is Mr Lloyd's first visit as minister to the South American country to view local police efforts in eradicating the drug crops. Britain increasingly has been providing military assistance to the Colombian Government in the drugs war, including SAS instructors.

Guerrilla campaign stifles 'sham' democracy in Colombia

FROM VICTORIA BURNETT IN GACHALA, COLOMBIA

WHEN Colombians go to the polls to choose their local government on October 26, the people of Gachala will not be joining them. Since rebels stormed this small Andean town on the night of August 3, all those running for mayor or the local council have withdrawn from the race.

The rebels gave aspiring politicians little choice: renounce your candidacy or become a military

target. To drive the message home, they blew the police station to pieces, dragged two businessmen from their houses and shot them dead, and called the petrified townspeople to the central square to tell them that elections were prohibited.

"It's the choice to take if you want to save your life," says Lucrécia Buitrago, the local council president, who decided not to run for re-election after the guerrillas' visit.

Gachala is one of around 40 municipalities without a single candidate in the elections. From the

Caribbean coast to the coca-growing plains of southeast Colombia, rebels have launched a violent offensive — killing at least 25 mayoral candidates and abducting hundreds to force them to drop out of the political race.

"They're trying to twist the elections to sabotage them," says Gabriel Toro, head of the Foundation of Municipal Governments. He expects elections to be cancelled in around 10 per cent of the country's 1,072 municipalities. Where polls are cancelled, a military mayor will be installed. Politics and bloodshed go

hand in hand in Colombia, where left-wing rebels, right-wing paramilitaries and drug traffickers traditionally use violence to dispose of opposition. Colombia prides itself on being the longest-standing constitutional democracy in Latin America, but it is increasingly one that exists only on paper.

"Colombian politics has become armed politics. Everyone knows that they can get something at a low cost through violence," says Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, a political scientist. Over the past year, rebels have

repeatedly humiliated the armed forces, taking advantage of the power vacuum left by a weakened government. President Samper was politically crippled by evidence that he won office in 1994 with the help of \$6 million (£3.7 million) from the Cali drug cartel.

Colombia's rebels have declared his Government illegitimate and by sabotaging the elections have shown that they are now running many rural areas. They are also hampering what they consider to be a sham democratic process.



Voinet wants cannabis to be declared legal

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Girlfriend accused of chicken battery

Fort Lauderdale: A Florida woman was arrested after allegedly pelting her boyfriend with frozen chicken legs, a telephone and a circular saw when he came home late, police said.

Sabrina Richardson was enraged when Darryl Garrett returned at about 1am on

Monday to the home they shared, said detectives at Broward County Sheriff's Office. Ms Richardson allegedly hit him with a barrage of frozen chicken legs, jumped on his back and bit him, then lobbed a telephone at him, deputies said. He ran to his car for refuge and Ms Richardson followed, threw the saw and cracked the windshield. Mr Garrett, 29, drove to his father's house and called the deputies.

Ms Richardson, 26, was charged with aggravated battery and throwing a deadly missile — the saw, not the chicken legs. (Reuters)

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A high-contrast, black and white photograph showing a dense crowd of people. In the foreground, a man is being held or restrained by others. The image is grainy and has a stark, dramatic quality.



and bitter criticism from Israelis resentful of his absentee status, Irving Moskowitz, a Miami-based businessman, emerged as the pivotal figure in a drama that Yassir Arafat, the Palestinian leader, said could prompt "a very negative reaction" unless swiftly resolved. Mr. Moskowitz, 70, a

confirmed enemy of the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian peace accord who has spent millions of dollars buying property for Jews in areas of east Jerusalem annexed by Israel after the 1967 war, appeared undeterred when he arrived at the disputed property under heavy guard.

As the former doctor arrived amid a posse of security men hired after Islamic Jihad vowed to kill him, one Jewish man triumphantly blew a ram's horn outside the houses at the centre of the dispute which is threatening to plunge the Holy Land into a new-wave of violence. The horn is the traditional instrument that the Bible says the Israelites used to bring down the walls of Jericho.

and to be leasing to them. The court appeal came after the settlers had rejected a compromise which would have seen them replaced by Jewish seminary students. The compromise was also angrily rejected

by the Palestinians, who have given warnings of an "explosion" of public anger if the evictions are not ordered before tomorrow's regular weekly Muslim prayers.

Deputy Education Minister, who had tried to mediate between Mr Moskowitz and Mr Netanyahu, urged the settlers to accept the compromise. "I am very afraid that if there is no agreement over

Up to 20 supporters of the ad hoc Land for Israel movement in the 120-member Knesset have vowed to try to bring down the Government if

the evacuation is ordered, claiming that it would contravene the essential platform of their movement: that Jews must be allowed to live anywhere in the biblical land of Israel.

FROM TUNKU VARADARAJAN
IN NEW YORK

Derek Fatchett, a Foreign Office Minister of State, said after visiting the South Pacific island group that his discussions with political leaders had confirmed the Government's view that Fiji's adoption of a new constitution paved the way for a return to democracy, better relations between the ethnic communities and readmission to the 53-member Commonwealth.

Fiji's membership lapsed in 1987 after two coups instigated by General Sitiveni Rabuka, the present Prime Minister. With the support of the indigenous inhabitants he overthrew the democratically elected Government, dominated by ethnic Indians, who form almost half the 800,000 population. The new constitution removes discrimination enacted against them.

Fiji has retained the Union Flag as part of its national flag and remained loyal to the Queen.

Readmission would have to be by unanimous vote, but there are fears that resentment in Delhi may lead to an Indian veto.

There are several potential new applicants for Commonwealth membership. Yemen has made a formal bid and Yassir Arafat, President of the Palestinian Authority, has expressed interest. Mary Robinson, the outgoing President of Ireland, also spoke of her country's possible membership.

AMERICANS see Britain as their country's second-best ally after Canada, according to an opinion poll published here, confirming that the "special relationship" is alive and well.

Of the 1,007 Americans surveyed by the Harris Poll organisation, 63 per cent described Britain as a "close ally", a number exceeded only by Canada, which scored a resounding 73 per cent. Britain's figures are up by 1 per cent from last year and by 7 per cent from their all-time low in 1994, when only 56 per cent of Americans believed that their transatlantic cousins were close allies.

Australia, France and Mexico followed behind Britain in the ally hierarchy, polling 48, 36 and 30 per cent respectively.

China, not surprisingly, emerges as the country viewed by Americans as the most unfriendly, with 60 per cent of those surveyed stating that Beijing was either "not friendly" or an "enemy." Only 6 per cent described China as a close ally. Russia was next, with 45 per cent expressing their continuing distrust of America's former Cold War adversary.

The most intriguing findings, however, pertain to Israel, another country with which America believes it has a special relationship. Israel is viewed as a close ally by only 29 per cent, with 32 per cent regarding it as unfriendly or worse. Only China and Russia rank higher than Israel in the unfriendliness stakes. Japan is seen as a close ally by only 21 per cent.

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Dr Thomas Stuttford reports on dementia; the benefits of coffee; slimming pills and side-effects; chronic eye problems; and a new form of mammography

Hope for those who suffer in Alzheimer's shadow

Doctors interested in Alzheimer's disease have been meeting in Stockholm this week, ready for World Alzheimer's Day on Sunday. Alzheimer's costs the nation £11.5 billion a year, £1.5 billion of which comes directly from the NHS budget. In the UK, some 600,000 people suffer from Alzheimer's disease, which affects 5 per cent of the population at the age of 65, one in five at the age of 80, and one in four at 85. There are many causes of dementia in the elderly, but Alzheimer's accounts for 75 per cent of all cases.

It is a myth that all patients with Alzheimer's are elderly. Most are, but it has been reported in patients as young as 29, and is not infrequently seen in those in their fifties.

Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are seldom out of the news, and there are few people who do not know someone who is suffering from the disease. Indeed, one prominent sufferer is former American President Ronald Reagan.

As is well documented, it causes a progressive loss of memory and patients with it find it more difficult to reason, and therefore to make quick judgments.

This lack of flexibility and slowness of thought easily leads to panic, so well demonstrated by "Jonesie", the Boer War veteran in *Dad's Army*, apt to rush about achieving nothing as he shouted "Don't panic! Don't panic!". Corporal Jones also demonstrated the lack of attention to turn-out and other signs of a disintegrating personality.

Patients with Alzheimer's become confused about where they are, and

the time of day. It is a common experience that patients with dementia forget that they have told you the same story 20 minutes earlier, have asked you the same question five minutes before, and fail to recognise their old friends.

It is less often realised that they forget familiar landmarks and so can easily become lost on a once-familiar journey. Last year, my host kindly offered me a lift to a nearby town where I was due to give a lecture. As we climbed into the car, he told me that he had done this journey every day for 40 years.

Perhaps we talked too much, but it soon became all too apparent that he was lost.

Finally we made it to the lecture hall an hour and a half late. Thereafter I watched him carefully for the rest of the evening and it was obvious that he was showing many of the signs of early dementia. It was obvious to me because I was a stranger, but Alzheimer's is so insidious in its onset, as in this case, that it often goes undetected by those who live with the patient.

Suggestions that there are factors that may delay the onset of Alzheimer's usually produce angry responses from the carers of patients with the disease. A frequent theme is that the sufferer was an individual of great intelligence when younger, always taking a lively interest in the world, and that it is insulting to suggest that Alzheimer's comes on later in those with a high education, and who had refused to abandon intellectual pursuits in retirement.

The Organisation Research Into Ageing has been examining the effects of education and previous



Ronald Reagan is suffering from the severe memory loss that afflicts sufferers of Alzheimer's disease

occupation on brain-reserve capacity in old age, in particular the retention of vocabulary and an understanding of the abstract meanings of words. The survey showed that although these qualities are affected in everybody with Alzheimer's disease, patients whose interests were intellectual when they were younger do not show the symptoms of Alzheimer's quite as soon.

A spokesman for Research Into Ageing said: "Our investigations into this important aspect of the disease are continuing. It is true that those people who have had a good education do fare better, but it may be that they are only more skilled at coping

with and hiding their early symptoms."

There are many other projects investigating the possible factors affecting the time of onset of Alzheimer's disease. There is evidence, for instance, that a high cholesterol level is associated with an increased liability.

One of the more exciting research projects is on the effect of alcohol on Alzheimer's disease in later life. There appears to be an apparent reduction in the incidents of dementia, along with a greater alertness, in elderly patients who drink a modest amount. This may be the result of the higher levels of circulating oestrogen

found in those who enjoy a drink or two. Other studies have shown that HRT reduces the incidence of Alzheimer's.

Scope for research into Alzheimer's disease is endless, and with an ageing population it has obvious appeal. The Alzheimer's Research Trust has already collected more than £1 million in aid of a centre in Cambridge. Another £4 million is needed.

Alzheimer's Research Trust, Llanos House, Granthams Road, Cambridge CB2 5LQ (01223 843899).

Research Into Ageing, Baird House, 15-17 St. Cross Street, London EC1 (0171-404 6876).

Slimming pills and the heart

British, as opposed to American, overweight patients who have taken slimming pills as part of their weight reduction programme should not be too concerned about the voluntary withdrawal of Ponderax and Adifax from the chemist. In Britain it has always been considered bad medicine to give a cocktail of slimming drugs to treat obesity. Most doctors have also made it plain to patients that when slimming pills have been needed, they should have been taken only for a limited time.

Conversely, in America, even reputable doctors have commonly prescribed a combination of drugs. Duramine, phentermine and Ponderax, fenfluramine has been their favourite mixture, and it is this combination, which has caused the recent furore precipitated by the discovery that some patients who had taken it had developed heart disease.

Fortunately British doctors have always been expressly advised not to use a combination.

In August this year, the *New England Journal of Medicine* reported that there was evidence that the Duramine/Ponderax mixture might be associated with heart disease, in particular damage to the mitral and aortic valves which resulted in their incompetence. This term means that the valve no longer closes tightly and therefore leaks. This leaking, technically regurgitation, can be detected by echocardiography in 30 per cent of a group of patients who had been given this combination of drugs.

Once the heart valve leaks, the patient's heart has to work harder to compensate for the heart muscle's less efficient pumping action. In extreme cases, this lack of efficiency may cause the patient to be breathless, and suffer other signs of heart strain. The changes in the heart circulation can also result in a change from the sound of the heartbeat and the patient may develop a "murmur". There is some evidence to suggest that a

valvular incompetence brought on by slimming pill combination may regress with the passage of time, but hard evidence on what is this most unexpected side-effect is not yet available.

Abrupt withdrawal of slimming pills for a person who has been taking them for some weeks can induce side-effects, including depression.

Every case must be considered individually but it is suggested that the dose of Adifax should initially be reduced from two to one capsule a day for the week before it is stopped entirely and those who have been prescribed Ponderax should only take one every other day for a week, and then abandon the course.

Chemists will continue to keep stocks of the drug to enable this withdrawal regime to be implemented but will thereafter not supply either drug again. This complete withdrawal of these drugs is a precautionary measure and as yet there is no alarm about the situation in Britain.

There have been earlier reports of essential pulmonary hypertension, another form of cardiovascular disease, following the use of Ponderax, even when this drug was used by itself. In Britain, the best known sufferer of this lethal complication is Professor Julia Polak, of Hammersmith Hospital in London, who needed a heart lung transplant. In America a few cases of valvular heart disease have been found in patients who have taken Adifax alone.

Even in the States those patients who are now suffering heart problems have on average taken the drugs for between six and 24 months. In Britain, a course of slimming pills was always restricted to three months.

People who have taken slimming pills and are worried are advised to see their doctor. If any abnormality, however trivial, is detected, they can be investigated by a specialist.

A helpline is available on 0800 980 7216.

In the UK, a course was restricted to three months

New breast screen gives better picture

MOST doctors are impressed by the results of the early intervention that is possible when breast cancer is detected by a mammography. The tumour may then be removed when it is so small that it cannot be felt with the hand.

Evidence is accumulating that shows regular screening saves lives. But one of the problems of mammography that doctors — but not patients — have always been aware of is that the interpretation of a mammogram requires considerable skill. This is particularly true the first time a woman has been screened, as there is no previous film with which to make a comparison.

Pulse magazine recently reported that a new form of mammography is about to be introduced. The new apparatus is scheduled to start working this month at the Royal Free Hospital in London. Called a scintimammogram, it will help doctors to make decisions in doubtful cases by picking up the presence of any malignant cells after they have been marked by a radioactive tracer that has been



Linda McCartney: had cancer

injected into the patient's foot. The scintimammogram will be particularly useful in patients with very dense breasts, such as those on hormone replacement treatment. And when a scintimammogram is used, the breast does not have to be so firmly squashed — this not only gives a better picture, but is also less uncomfortable for the patient.

Caffeine is good for your health — after all

ALTHOUGH coffee and caffeine have traditionally had a bad press, this reputation is undeserved. In the past year or two, reputable medical journals have reported that caffeine can revive a flagging memory, can reduce accidents in night workers, can speed recovery from a cold and may even cut the suicide rate.

Sjögren's Syndrome is a chronic inflammatory disease which causes a marked dryness of the eyes, mouth and other mucous membranes. In many cases these symptoms are associated with arthritis. Although Sjögren's Syndrome is little known, it is more common than systemic lupus erythematosus but less often diagnosed than rheumatoid arthritis. As well as the dis-

At a conference in San Francisco earlier this year, a report from Professor Takayuki Shibamoto, of the University of California, showed that both regular and decaffeinated coffee contained antioxidants, the chemicals that may protect against some forms of heart disease and cancer.

Dry eyes that mask a problem
comfort caused by dry eyes, and the problems ranging from a lack of sense of taste and smell to dental decay. Sjögren's can cause more serious disease. Dryness in the respiratory tract can result in chronic bronchitis, even pneumonia, and it can also be involved in kidney disease, as

well as neurological problems affecting the nerves leading to the face and the eyes. In women the lining of the genital tract is also unusually dry. Dry eyes and mouth are usually regarded as the first symptoms of Sjögren's but a recent study reported in the *British Journal of Obstetrics*

and Gynaecology has shown that, on average, women with Sjögren's Syndrome develop a dry vagina eight years before they notice a dry eye. In a study of 240 women who had seen their gynaecologist about painful intercourse, seven were suffering from Sjögren's, and not from any psychological sexual dysfunction. They needed a lubricant rather than counselling.

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Times have caught up with politicians' wives and lives: Tony Blair and his wife Cherie; Michael Howard and his wife Sandra; Peter Lilley and his wife Gail; Neil Hamilton and his wife Christine

Political shadows

Silent, supportive and virtually invisible — except at election time. Who'd be a politician's partner? Mary Ann Sieghart reports

Once the stereotypical political partner was a pearl-necked typist in a Pugin-panelled office keeping the MP's secretarial allowance in the family; or a full-time wife and mother, perhaps, stoking the home fires back in the constituency. Either way she was loyal and able — and awfully good at opening fêtes.

But these days we have gay MPs with lovers claiming travel concessions; women MPs whose husbands, or long-term partners, are the supportive ones; and even a Prime Minister's wife with a bona fide career. It's not just the ruling party that has changed: times have caught up with Conservative politicians' wives and lives too.

For the stalwart Tory wives, of whom Neil Hamilton's wife Christine must be the patron saint, the realities of a future together in Opposition — or even out of Parliament altogether — are hard to adjust to. Sally Neubert, organiser of the Conservative Parliamentary Wives Association, suffered greatly when her husband, Sir Michael, was thrown out of Romford after 23 years. As far as she was concerned, the outcome of May 1 was "like a death in the family. You get so many letters, and all they lack is a black border around them."

But for Gail Lilley, wife of Peter Lilley, now the Shadow Chancellor but previously the Social Security Secretary in the Major Government, there has been a liberation in defeat. "I've had 14 years of put up and shut up and I just said to my husband the other day, 'self-sacrifice has stopped.' For all those years of Tory rule, Gail had to hold her tongue. 'Now it's over I can laugh about it, but I never talked about it at the time because I can't stand whingeing.'"

Gail, a successful artist and former fashion designer, recalls the sudden change in her life when her husband was first elected 14 years ago. "Suddenly there was no husband, just nothing. He would come in at midnight, two in the morning, four in the morning. Then you know you've been sidelined. They start to treat the home like a hotel and opt out of life."

Sometimes they're not even working. By phoning the number mysteriously labelled "Behind the Chair", she would find out if voting was going on late at night. "That way you'd know when they ought to be on their way home. But they're

not. They're milling around, scheming and plotting and chattering. At the beginning, it was actually quite devastating."

Being the wife of a minister, she says, was even worse. "I remember once I had to call for Peter at the Treasury. They loathe wives there — it's a very masculine place. The driver took me up to the private office. They said: 'You can sit there and wait for him.' And there was my husband's door and outside the door there was this little hard chair. It was just like waiting outside the headmaster's office."

Then, at the Department of Social Security, "he used to get these diaries and there'd be a dinner engagement, 7.30 for 8, and at the bottom it would say, 'Black tie, speech and Mrs Lilley'. That was where I came in the pecking order!"

Ministers' wives also have to absorb the abuse that is likely to come their husbands' way. Gail and Peter Lilley had their house daubed by fathers protesting about the Child Support Agency. "Then, several hours later, the single mothers came. Then we had the asylum-seekers. It's a lovely feeling now when I hear the news: 'The Government came under fire yesterday...' It has been harder for Peter, though. 'My husband's been in Parliament for 14 years and he's never been in Opposition, so there's this huge period of adjustment. He's like someone who's come out of long-term care.'"

Others tell similar stories. When former Home Secretary Michael Howard's new paper bleeped at a party soon after the election, he had no idea how to turn it off. "Didn't you have one when you were a minister?" asked his companion. "Yes," replied the Shadow Foreign Secretary, "but I had a man to carry it."

Rachael Maund, the wife of Andrew Robathan, another of only 165 Tories returned, has a different angle on her political partnership. As a City fund manager she feels "very fortunate to have my own career and my own life because

it's possible to get very wrapped up in your husband's career". But political wives who have careers of their own still have to make big compromises. For being an MP, and still more so a minister, takes precedence over everything else, as Rachael discovered when her baby Kit

Valley has given up his associate directorship at a PR company to work for her at Westminster. The company car has gone, and the pay cut "has been a shock to my bank manager". Even his skills need brushing up. "Caroline thinks my filing is crap, and she's right." But he's happy with the arrangement. "It fulfils my ambition to help her politically. I can enjoy it without having tremendous status."

At least male political partners don't suffer from the Hillary Clinton syndrome: having to exaggerate their domesticity to make their lives seem less threatening to the general public. Hillary swapped cookie recipes during her husband's first presidential campaign, while Cherie Blair, who has a first-class degree and a career at the Bar, guest-edited *Prima* magazine. Some working wives feel let down by these compromises. Rachael Maund, for instance, says: "At the end of the day, Cherie Blair dropped everything to traipse round after her husband during the election campaign. She was never even allowed to open her mouth. What's the reason for

that, other than to look decorative?" Her favourite political wife is Gillian Clarke, Ken's wife, who makes no effort to look other than dowdy. "It's quite concerning," says Rachael, "that the British electorate can't accept a political leader with a working wife who doesn't look glamorous."

For a woman who never used to wear make-up or worry about her hair, Cherie has had to suffer more makeovers than British Airways. But other Labour spouses have it easier. Pauline Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister's wife, has been allowed to keep her own brassy look and does not have to hold hands like the

arrangement. "I can enjoy it without having tremendous status."

Such public displays of affection make Gail Lilley's flesh crawl. During the Tory leadership election, she recalls: "Every time we were due on a photo call it was, 'Will you hold hands?' and I thought, 'What? I don't hold hands with my husband in public! Cherie Blair started all this. It's all her fault.'"

For both Gail and Sandra Howard, wife of Michael Howard, the Tory leadership election — what Gail refers to as "that little horror" — raised the possibility of playing opposite Cherie Blair as Shadow First Lady. For Sandra, "normal life seemed to be put on hold, really". She did not dare imagine what it would be like if Michael were chosen. Gail, however, admits she was worried that Peter might win. "I had a huge sense of humour failure when I thought of the ramifications."

Labour wives are discovering that they have their own problems now that their husbands are in office. Because their seats tend to be concentrated in the North of England and Scotland and Wales, they often see their spouses only at weekends. Maureen Ingram, whose husband Adam is now Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, lives near Glasgow. "Sometimes when they come back on a Friday and you've been running the show all week, they take charge and you have to bite your tongue," she says. Like other

new ministers' spouses, Maureen is having to adjust. "I see less of him now. He used to be home on Thursday evening, now he's not back till Friday afternoon. Then he does his boxes at the weekend and the phone's always ringing. It's only been ten weeks but it feels like ten years."

Red boxes — which contain work for ministers to do at home — are the bane of the spouse's life. Gail Lilley remembers five of them arriving on their first Bank Holiday together after Peter became a minister. One wife of a new senior Cabinet minister says that waking up to discover that your husband has been appointed to government ought to be classed for stressfulness alongside moving house, bereavement and divorce. Another new minister found that, initially, his young children loved opening the boxes. Now, when he can't play football with them because he has too much work, they say: "Why can't Tony Blair do his own boxes?"

David Mills, husband of Tessa Jowell, Minister of State at the Department of Health, says: "They're an absolute bloody nuisance. She gets up at 5.30 each morning to do her boxes. It's ruining my sleep pattern." One solution to the time problem is to enter the House yourself. That is what Julie Kirkbride has done. Newly married to Andrew MacKay, Shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, she is now Conservative MP for Bromsgrove. "Being at the House of Commons makes it more convenient because I see more of him. Before, I was up in Bromsgrove and he was down at Westminster."

In becoming an MP, Julie has managed to avoid the biggest irritation, being treated as an appendage. Some wives refused to be interviewed for this piece for that very reason. Even Rachael Maund, who enjoys her life, admits: "I got fed up to the back teeth with people asking, 'What's it like being an MP's wife? I used to say, 'Why don't you ask what's it like being an investment manager's husband?' Indeed."

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They loathe wives at the Treasury. It's very masculine

TOMORROW

"We are loyal to each other in the fullest sense of the word," Dorian Jabri, partner of Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, talks for the first time about their private and political partnership



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Time to maintain digital restraint



COMMENTARY
by our City Editor

This month, the members of the Bank of England's monetary policy committee practised admirable self-restraint. They sat on their hands and allowed interest rates to remain untouched. But yesterday they must have felt a tickle of itchy fingers as a series of buoyant statistics were unveiled.

The figures painted a picture of a country where unemployment is falling, earnings are rising and consumers are confident enough to be out shopping. The question is whether this is a healthy and sustainable state of affairs or whether it is the sign of an economy about to rush out of control.

The fear is that the MPC will interpret the statistics as the latter and may already be preparing to let their digits spring back into action and push up interest rates next month. The minutes of their August meeting, released yesterday, give weight to such a view, betraying an air of unanimous hawkishness around the table. But the MPC should be restrained a little longer. Unlike City analysts, who must produce instant reaction to the statistics, the MPC has weeks to ponder the facts behind the figures and closer investigation should convince the members that their continued inaction is desirable.

The retailers are already delving deep into their vocabularies to explain why the loud ringing of their tills should not be

interpreted as a boom. If there is a hint of talking their own book in this, their shareholders would expect nothing less. Kingfisher's Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy was faced with the task yesterday of explaining why his soaring sales were not symptomatic of a consumer boom. Not the easiest of tasks. But not every store is enjoying the same level of success, and the Kingfisher figures are the product of a combination of clever retailing and being in the right markets, for both its Comet and B&Q subsidiaries have undoubtedly been reaping the benefits of the windfalls that have recently swollen consumers' spending power.

The full effect of the demutualisation bonuses cannot yet be determined but, despite yesterday's news from Dublin of yet another building society turning into a bank, the happy days for carpetbaggers are drawing to a close. We may have to wait until Christmas to see just what proportion of the gains is to be spent and what will be squirreled away in sensible saving, but the windfall effect does need to be stripped from the retail sales figures before a true pattern of dangerous extravagance could be diagnosed.

Over at Next the company is already experiencing something of a slowdown to its phenomenal growth. The explanations ranged from the weather, whose impact on the Government's monthly figures should never be underestimated, to the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales. If the shops are shut, as they were on that Saturday, then the tills do not ring. That factor alone should provide the MPC with hours of debate.

A heavy brew of rumours

City rumours feed on themselves until they assume gargantuan proportions. The latest one to be showing signs of over-indulgence is the story that Bass is about to join forces with Rank.

The thinking behind this is that the ambitious Sir Ian Prosser, prohibited from carry-

ing out his Carlsberg coup by the mean Margaret Beckett, is now anxious to see corporate action elsewhere. And Rank, so the gossip goes, may be amenable to an approach as its share price languishes and the analysts pour scorn on its chief executive.

Those who like a little substance with their rumours can even point out that the two companies have already begun to cooperate. Bass's Marriott hotels having a nascent relationship with Rank's Tom Cobbleigh pub business.

But while there may be bits of Rank that would appeal to Sir Ian, there are elements that most certainly would not. Wet blankets they may be, but those close to the company suggest that Sir Ian is not about to pay over the odds in order to provide Andrew Teare with a comfortable exit route from Rank. Bass has already demonstrated that it can grow its own format pubs, with the very successful All Bar One

chain. There is no reason why the company should do what Rank did and pay hugely over the odds to acquire another pub business, Tom Cobbleigh.

If Hard Rock could be extricated from the Rank stable, then Sir Ian would surely be interested, but so would a host of international operators. There is every reason why purchasers might want it, but no reason why Rank should sell. So for Bass, the choice must be to take all of Rank or none — the likelihood is that the answer will be none.

There are, after all, other businesses that must be attracting Sir Ian's attention at the moment. The William Hill betting shop business is an obvious one. The business is up for sale and has attracted several bids, both from abroad and from home grown venture capitalists with plenty of cash. For Bass, with its Coral chain of bookies, William Hill would be an obvious fit. But for one thing: the

spectre of Margaret Beckett, the interventionist President of the Board of Trade.

After his abortive Carlsberg venture, Sir Ian would not want another counter-productive tangle with her. But if a deal could first be cooked up with Ladbroke to split the William Hill portfolio, Bass might avoid a monopolies problem and back a winner.

Changing rules for measuring jobs

When in Opposition, Labour derided the unemployment statistics. The more optimistic the figures, the louder the criticism of their authenticity. But things look different from the perspective of Government. Now Labour ministers seem to be losing their enthusiasm for ditching the current measuring system.

Perhaps financial considerations are influencing them. The set of figures that Labour had previously put its faith in, and which are published quarterly, would bring an annual bill of around £8 million if they were produced monthly. There are suggestions that ministers may be tempted to stick with the

current basis of measurement, with just a few cosmetic changes.

But the need for change is clear. While the fall of almost 50,000 in yesterday's jobless total was welcome, the inability of the Office for National Statistics to suggest what the monthly trend in unemployment now is caused some concern among those who snatch at statistics as fodder for their computer models.

Ordinary folk might think that diving a trend from monthly figures should not be difficult but statisticians are a different breed. The ONS chaps may be trying to push the Government into taking a decision over how unemployment is to be measured. Will it put its money where its mouth certainly was, and clean up the jobless figures once and for all by sanctioning a new monthly measure? Or will spending pressures prevail against principle?

Ruled out

GREAT news. The Government has lined up a new regulation task force. This one, says Dr David Clark, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, is to help produce better regulation rather than less regulation. This may indicate a sense of reality, but plenty of red tape still needs to be cut. The team assembled under the leadership of Northern Foods' Chris Huskins should regularly remind itself that in regulation, less is good.

Savoy checks out cities overseas

By DOMINIC WALSH

THE Savoy Group, which has just completed a £72 million refurbishment project, is pressing ahead with plans to buy up to ten hotels in leading international cities over the next five years.

Ramón Pajares, managing director, said yesterday that he was preparing a strategy document on international expansion that he would present to the board soon. He added: "The brand name has a value which gives us a tremendous opportunity to acquire hotels in the right cities abroad."

He pointed out that expanding the Savoy name would decrease the current ratio of overhead costs, enable the company to develop a proper central reservations system, and allow it to compete with the top international hotel groups. He cited Paris and Barcelona as possible targets.

The news came as Mr Pajares unveiled an 84 per cent jump in pre-tax profits in the first half to £7.7 million as the benefits of the refurbish-

ment began to kick in. The two-year project was completed last week as the finishing touches were put to the £40 million restoration of Claridge's, one of the group's four luxury London hotels. Turnover was 4 per cent better at £45.2 million.

Mr Pajares said that one of the key factors had been a rise in operating margins from 11.5 per cent to 18 per cent, largely because of stringent management controls and the addition of new bedrooms and other services during the refurbishment.

Average occupancy in London rose from 59.8 to 65.6 per cent. However, after taking into account the rooms out of commission for refurbishment, occupancy per available room rose from 81.7 to 85.2 per cent.

Earnings came in at 19.2p (11.3p) per A share, but, as in past years, there is no interim dividend.

Reforms pay off, page 31

Eastern promise attracts Wassall

By PAUL DURMAN

WASSALL, the manufacturing group that made a £277 million profit from this year's sale of General Cable, its US copper wire business, is looking to spend part of its £300 million cash pile in South East Asia.

The company believes the collapse in the region's stock markets has thrown up interesting acquisition opportunities, particularly in Thailand.

It is looking for a Chinese to become chief executive of Wassall Asia Pacific, its 70 per cent-owned subsidiary, which is separately quoted in Singapore. Chris Miller, chief executive, said Wassall was looking to spend perhaps £20 million in the Far East, but would have no qualms about making a bigger investment if it can find a good deal.

Mr Miller said the company is not close to a deal at the moment. "It's got to be so much

more important to do the right deal than a quick deal."

With borrowing facilities, he said Wassall could easily afford to spend £500 million. The group is keen to buy solid manufacturing businesses that have lost their way.

The revival of General Cable since its purchase in 1994 was one factor behind the improvement in Wassall's underlying pre-tax profits, which rose 21 per cent to £29.7 million in the first half. With the £199 million profit from selling the first 30 per cent of General Cable in May, total pre-tax profit in the six months to June 30 was £231.5 million (£22.4 million).

Wassall will pay an interim dividend of 2.3p a share, up 10 per cent, as a foreign income dividend on November 14.

Tempus, page 30

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Account	124.20	131.40	+ 0.80	3.90	High Income	21.52	22.81	+ 0.22	10.30
					Japan Growth	67.85	93.24	+ 1.03	

KAZAKHSTAN

FOCUS

David Watts introduces a three-page report on a country that is moving quickly to develop its rich resources

Nation poised at the crossroads

Even by the standards of the former Eastern bloc, few countries have undergone as rapid a transformation as Kazakhstan. Once the dumping ground for ethnic minorities that Stalin found inconvenient, and later a testing ground for the Soviet Union's most unpalatable weapons systems, the country has moved so fast to privatised modernisation that signs of a hankering for the old ways are evident.

If the Kazakhs give the impression that they are trying to transform themselves too quickly, it is hardly surprising given the world demand for the country's oil, gas and numerous other mineral resources. Scarcely a single developed Western country is unrepresented among the legions of business people flying into Almaty, the capital, and few Asian countries, either. Almost 100 companies are represented at a two-day investment conference starting today in London, an indication of the interest being shown in the potential of this country at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

President Nazarbayev has shown great skill in maintaining the unity of the country during the post-Communist period when anti-Russian feeling could easily have split over into clashes between Kazakhs and Russians, who have played such a large part in the country's economy. He is also one of the few leaders to negotiate successfully the transition from Communism through his standing in what is essentially a tribal society. He enjoys overwhelming support in the presidency, which is contested every five years.

Britain and America are in the forefront of the drive to develop Kazakhstan's oil resources as a complementary source of supply to the Middle East.

In world terms, the Central Asian states' reserves are still a fraction of those in the Middle East. Kazakhstan's proven reserves are eight billion barrels, according to British Petroleum, compared to Iran's 93 billion and Iraq's 112 billion. But Kazakhstan's position and its strategic potential make it attractive to Western governments. Advanced technology in oil re-

To bring in Western money the Government has been willing to create laws to deal with the new reality

covery allows Western countries to gain a quick foothold in an area starved of modern industrial technology and Western interest and capital for more than 50 years. Equally, for the West, the potential benefits of making friends on the periphery not only of the old Soviet empire but on the edge of its Chinese equivalent are obvious.

To bring in Western money and expertise, the Government of Kazakhstan has been willing to create laws to deal with the new reality — often with frightening speed and simplicity of approach. This can be risky: the Government could change its mind just as quickly.

Some see the return of the old system of centralisation through this arbitrary, extra-legal approach. New investors should take care to understand what they are dealing with before making financial commitments. This becomes even more advisable because the

Government is now taking the South-East Asian "tiger" economies as its model, with the concomitant desire to place economic progress above everything else. As a result, inflation was allowed to accelerate to four figures at one stage, with a consequent disastrous effect on living standards.

This tendency to disregard the lot of the ordinary worker is nowhere more evident than in the grandiose plans to move the capital from Almaty to Akmoła at the turn of the century. There is a certain logic in moving the state capital to an area that is now Russian-dominated as a means of better uniting the multi-farious ethnic groups. But the estimated cost is \$1 billion.

Akmoła, a farming town in mosquito-ridden fields, seems an unlikely prospect as a capital. But President Nazarbayev seems determined to go ahead — and unwilling to acknowledge that his Government is presently unable even to meet salaries and pensions in full. The problem is that the President is offering tax incentives to those willing to contribute, as indeed he is to foreign investors. This is having a detrimental effect on the budget, itself the beneficiary of a \$450 million credit line from the International Monetary Fund. The credit is dependent on the containment of project costs at \$500 million.



A traditional Kazakh hunter releases his specially trained eagle

Signs of life stir in the economy

As trade routes open up, foreign investors are coming in. Ahmed Rashid reports

Since gaining independence seven years ago, landlocked Kazakhstan has been desperately seeking exit routes for its vast oil, gas and mineral resources. But creating trade routes has been the hardest task, thanks to wars in Afghanistan and the Caucasus to the south, a difficult Russia, which wants to restrain Kazakhstan's growth, to the west, and problems with China over their common border.

And since independence, the Central Asian Republics have suffered from low growth, high inflation and a decline in industrial output compared with when they were part of the Soviet Union.

But Kazakhstan may be about to turn the corner: it is showing the first signs of economic growth since the Soviet Union broke up, and is opening up trade routes to the west and the east, while the rapid privatisation of the economy has encouraged European, American and Japanese investors.

Earlier this year, the Finance Minister, Aleksandr Pavlov, said

Kazakhstan was slowly achieving economic stability. Industrial output grew by 0.3 per cent in 1996, compared with an 8 per cent fall in 1995 and even larger drops right after independence. Mr Pavlov expects gross domestic product (GDP), which stood at 1.41 trillion tenge (\$18 billion) in 1996, would grow to 1.74 trillion tenge in 1997.

In June government leaders told a conference for foreign investors that inflation, now 17 per cent, would be reduced to 10 per cent in 1998, and that 80 per cent of the country's enterprises had been privatised. The privatisation of the main industrial assets, farmland and even shops has been helped by loans and expertise from the European Community. The new stock market has been a great success and a new leasing law is expected to be passed by the end of this year, which will encourage further foreign investment.

Kazakhstan also plans to join the World Trade Organisation and make its currency, the tenge, fully convertible by next year. There is a slow but steady industrial revival and its potential agricultural wealth, particularly in wheat production, is being boosted by foreign technology and improved water management. After settling their border problems, China has emerged as the largest trade partner. A railway line now delivers Chinese consumer items and machinery directly from Beijing to Almaty. In return, Kazakhstan exports wheat and oil products.

But Western investors have warned the Government that the stability and full implementation of contract terms and a fair and uniform application of new investment laws is needed if the country was to attract greater foreign investment. Kazakhstan has a poor reputation for observing contract terms, particularly in rebuilding its infrastructure, because of frequent cancellations of signed contracts with Western companies. There are also complaints about corruption.

Nevertheless, with high inflation and unemployment, many still face hardship. Tens of thousands of people, especially in the mining sector, went on strike during the 1996-97 winter because of unpaid wages and pensions totalling \$800 million. The Government has since paid off much of the backlog thanks to recently signed oil deals.

President Nazarbayev has said one way to cut costs would be to reduce the one million bureaucrats who rule a population of 17 million. To this end, he sacked thousands of government employees in May.

Kazakhstan's economic future depends on the exploitation of its oil and gas reserves and it is this area which has attracted foreign investors in recent months, as hopes rise that pipelines can now be built eastward and westward, ending the country's long isolation.

The new stock market has been a great success

BALANCE SHEET

	1995	96	97*
Total GDP (\$bn):	8.6	19.1	20.6
GDP % change (constant prices):	-3.6	+1.4	+2.8
Industrial output % change:	-7.9	+0.5	+1.2
Agricultural output % change:	-21.3	0.0	+1.0
Consumer prices % change (end year):	+60.3	+40.1	+29.0
Consumer prices % change (annual av):	+178.3	+51.1	+35.0
Average wages % change:	+70.5	+23.0	n/a
Broad money % change (end year):	+116.0	+70.0	n/a
Total trade balance (\$bn):	-0.2	-0.6	n/a
Exports (\$bn):	5.2	5.4	n/a
Imports (\$bn):	5.4	6.0	n/a
Foreign direct investment (\$bn):	723	860	n/a
Unemployment rate %:	2.4	3.5	n/a
Proved oil reserves (billion barrels):	At end 1996:	8.0	
Proved natural gas reserve (trn m ³):	At end 1996:	1.04	

*Projection

Source: EBRD; UN Statistical Review of World Energy 1997

KAZAKHOIL

Playing its role in nation building

Production and Refining of Hydrocarbons

KAZAKHOIL is the largest oil and gas company operating in the Republic of Kazakhstan. During the first half of 1997, enterprises of the company produced more than 10 million tons oil, 1 million tons of condensate and 2,732 BCM of gas. Subsidiaries and joint ventures of the company are engaged in developing some of the best production projects and are well known outside of Kazakhstan. They include JSC Embamunaigas, JSC Tengizmunaigas, JV Tengizchevroil (with reserves of 1 billion tons of gas condensate), among others. The company's aggregate volume of oil reserves is more than 1.5 billion tons.

Marketing and Sales of Hydrocarbons

The company pays special attention to the organization of marketing and effective sales of products. Our department for project management and our subsidiary KAZAKHOIL-COMMERCE carry out special research of energy markets both in Kazakhstan and abroad. The company is also a major trader in Central Asia. Exports of the five largest enterprises affiliated in one way or another with the company amounted to 3.5 million tons of oil for the first half of 1997. KAZAKHOIL has set itself the goal of increasing sales of refined products. The company attaches special significance to its activity on Kazakhstan's internal market.

Combining subdivisions engaged in exploration, production, refining and sales of product, KAZAKHOIL is gradually acquiring the characteristics of a vertically integrated, multi-profile oil and gas company.

The program for Restructuring and Privatizing the Oil and Gas Sector.

As a result of the large scale privatization of the oil and gas sector being carried out in Kazakhstan, our company has become partners with major international firms. The division of functions between State-owned and private enterprises within the industry has been accomplished. At present, the structure of Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector meets international requirements and provides investors with a favorable environment in which to work. On the whole, approximately \$2.3 B have been invested in projects in which the company participates. Companies from the USA, Great Britain, Italy, Russia, France, Turkey and other countries are the main source of such investments. KAZAKHOIL is participating in the elaboration of a program for prospective development of oil and gas industry.

Management of Projects

The company represent and defends the State's interests by managing the State's portfolio of shares and its equity interests in such international projects as the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, as well as various joint ventures and production sharing agreements. In accordance with a government resolution, the company is charged with organizing investment tenders and conducting negotiations on exploration and production projects in Kazakhstan, including Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian and the Aral Sea. KAZAKHOIL is also authorized to attract investments through securities operations.

The Resource Base

The Republic's established hydrocarbon reserves of category oil for 206 discovered fields amount to more than 6 billion tons of oil, 1,901 billion cubic meters of gas and 944 million tons of gas condensate.

At present, 77 fields are under development with aggregate reserves of 5.17 billion tons oil, 1,528 billion cubic meters of gas and 880 million tons of gas condensate.

The largest of these fields according to established reserves are Tengiz, Karachaganak, Kenba, Zhanazhol, Zhetyabai, Kalamkas, Karazhanbas, Uzen and Kunkol. Their aggregate reserves are 4,480 billion tons of oil, 1,448 billion cubic meters of gas and 881 million tons of gas condensate. Projections for an increase in established oil reserves by the year 2005 amount to 15 billion tons.

The Republic's most prospective projects will involve development of Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian offshore, where projected reserves of liquid hydrocarbons are estimated at 10 billion tons and investments in developing offshore fields should total \$150 B.

For more information about our activities, please contact us.

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Door opens for West

In the words of President Nazarbayev, foreign investors now have a "one-stop shop" to guide them into Kazakhstan. Since March the State Committee on Investments has been the sole government body that foreign investors have to deal with. This has streamlined procedures and reduced bureaucratic delay. A raft of legislation safeguards foreign investors' rights, reinforced further by newly adopted international accounting standards, legal codes and company reporting rules.

Generous tax holidays are on offer to foreign investors: the bigger the project, the bigger the tax break. Up to 100 per cent off the basic rate of income tax, land tax and property tax is available during the first five years of an investment project. Thereafter, reductions of up to 50 per cent off the same taxes apply for the next five years.

Foreign investors also qualify for complete or partial exemption from customs du-

David Rudnick on how bureaucratic burdens have been swept away in a bid to attract Western companies

ties normally levied on imports of equipment and raw materials. And as a further incentive, the Government is set to offer more generous tax allowances on depreciation, to speed up industrial renovation and modernisation.

Foreign investors in priority sectors of the economy already benefit from government grants, which may include the provision of free state-owned land and industrial equipment.

One of the most challenging projects under way is the development of Kazakhstan's first Special Economic Zone, Kyzyl-Orda. Located in the windswept centre of the country, the pioneering city has already attracted the Canadian oil company, Hurricane Hydrocarbons, which has pledged to invest \$280 million

(£175 million) over the next six years.

The legal undertakings which the Government has given foreign investors guarantees their right to manage their enterprises freely. Investors' profits and dividends are similarly protected by law, as is their right to convert local currency into hard currency and repatriate funds. The Government has also undertaken not to impose price controls on raw material inputs or finished products.

Potential investors requiring further information on tax and investment laws and regulations can approach the International Tax and Investment Centre, an independent non-profit organisation that brings together Western com-

panies and government officials in monthly forums.

Alistair King, of the law firm Baker & McKenzie, who is based in Almaty, believes that the practical value of the legal guarantees offered to foreign investors is not at issue. "Problems can arise at micro level," he says. "The one-stop shop approach means that relevant ministries may not be brought into the picture at the start, creating problems later."

Day-to-day disputes centre on detailed regulatory concerns rather than the overall investment framework. Mr King says: "Experience has shown that the grant of a concession to produce locally may not ensure a permit to export the product."

Mr King adds that extensive diligence is needed by a Western investor in any joint venture partnership.

"Legal ownership of assets may at first glance lie with your putative partner, but the legal documentation is often less than conclusive."

Still, the legal framework should be adequate to underpin the activities of Almaty's new stock exchange, due to open by the end of this month. The exchange will feature three tiers of trading and the Government plans to sell off 5-10 per cent of shares in several partly privatised "blue chip" enterprises including oil companies, metal plants and Kazakhtelecom.

The stock exchange's regulatory system has been prepared with the help of foreign advisers, but Mr King believes that further regulatory provision will be needed after trading begins. "Central depositories and an active trading environment are still novel concepts in Kazakhstan." So fine portfolio investment, as opposed to direct investment, may take time to take off.

Whether President Nazarbayev achieves his ambition of making Kazakhstan the first Central Asian tiger depends crucially on his success in attracting foreign investment. Foreign investors appreciate Kazakhstan's strong Government and political stability and the backing it has from the international community.

The United States has signed a security pact with Kazakhstan. And Kazakhstan's friendship with fellow Muslim countries, notably Malaysia and Indonesia, is stimulating serious investor interest there.



Odds-on favourite: a Kazakh horseman wins a kiss in this traditional event known as *Kyz Kuu*, or "catch a girl"

Land of steppes and deserts

With an area of 2.7 million square kilometres, Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world, but its population is less than 17 million. Most of the country is steppe, and 40 per cent is desert, though it has forests, mountains and glaciers. The climate is dramatic. Temperatures can range from almost 50C in summer to minus 40C in winter.

The capital Almaty has a population of 1.17 million, but the President has decreed a new capital: Akmol, a former caravan halt on the Silk Route, which has a population of about 300,000.

Like most countries formerly under the Soviet umbrella, Kazakhstan suffers from some pollution. Kyzyl-Orda, in the middle of the country, is not only a Special Economic Zone, but also designated an Ecological Disaster Area by the

Peter Brown supplies the facts and figures

United Nations because of its river pollution.

In June, Kazakhstan destroyed its last nuclear bomb as part of an agreement that the Kazakhs claim brought them under an American security umbrella (a point which President Nazarbayev will raise in Washington this year). Meanwhile, years of nuclear testing have reduced life expectancy and increased cancer rates in the Semipalatinsk region.

None of this is likely to deter investors. For them, travel arrangements are improving. Flights go from Frankfurt, Vienna, Amsterdam and Istanbul to Almaty airport, which is managed by

Lufthansa, KLM and Turkish Airlines are among the carriers, and British Airways may join them soon. A chartered flight to Ural'sk via Italy leaves Stansted twice a week. The bigger cities of Karaganda, Chimkent, Semipalatinsk and Atyrau also have their own airfields. The roads are best suited to 4x4 vehicles.

Living standards are improving and hotels are springing up fast. Almaty has a Hyatt Regency and a five-star Ankara Hotel. The dollar is the currency of choice. In general the language is Kazakh in the regions and Russian in the cities, although perhaps 30 per cent of the urban population speaks English.

● Visa and other information: 0171-581-4646. LTTI exporting advice: 0171-215 8215. Details of this week's Investing in Kazakhstan conference at the Royal Garden Hotel, London: 0171-453 2703

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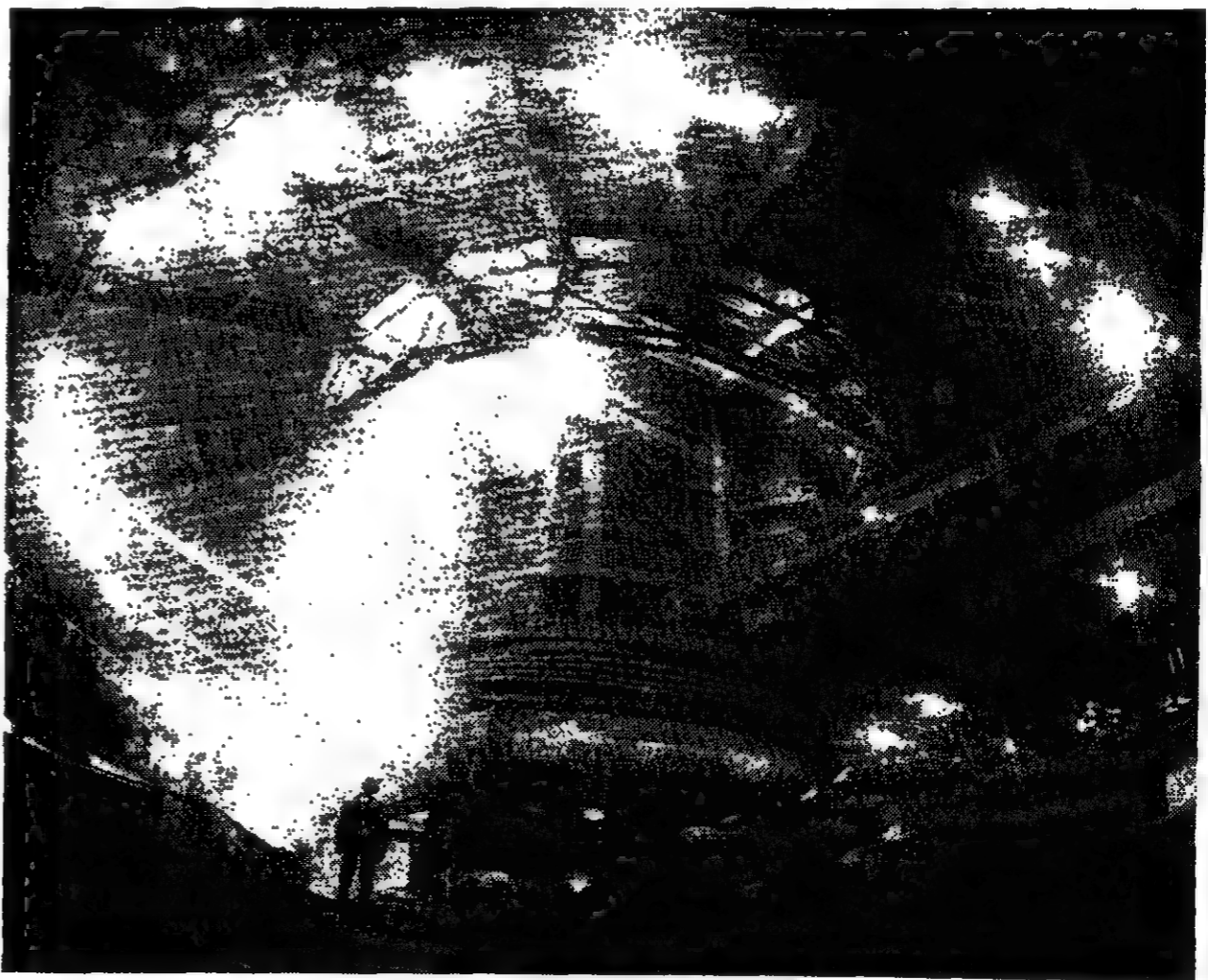
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An oil giant of the future

Ahmed Rashid discovers foreign investors competing for a share of the natural resources

Western and Asian oil companies have been flocking to Almaty to take up oil concessions as Kazakhstan aims to become the sixth largest oil producer in the world in the next century. With potential oil reserves of 95 billion barrels, eight billion of which are proven reserves, and more than four trillion cubic metres of gas reserves, not surprisingly Kazakhstan is being called the next Saudi Arabia.

After independence, American oil companies were the first to stake claims in Kazakhstan. Chevron and Mobil acquired the huge Tengiz field in western Kazakhstan, promising a potential ten-year investment programme of up to \$20 billion. But until this year, these companies were hampered by Russia in their efforts to build export pipelines across the former Soviet Union to get the oil to Europe and the Gulf.

However, on May 16, Kazakhstan signed a landmark contract with Oman, Russia and several Western oil companies, including British Gas, to build a \$2 billion, 1,500-kilometre pipeline from Tengiz to the Black Sea. Russia agreed to the project only after its oil companies were given a large stake in it.

Asian companies have also moved in quickly. In June, China's National Petroleum Company (CNPC) beat the American companies Texaco and Amoco to win a major oil concession in which CNPC would invest about \$4 billion in the Aktyubinsk oil enterprise, taking a 60 per cent share.

The Kazakhs received a signature bonus (a cash bonus on signing the contract) of \$320 million from the Chinese, which the Government said would go towards paying off the backlog in unpaid salaries and pensions. China also promised to build a pipeline from the concession to Xinjiang in eastern China and said that it would help Kazakhstan build a pipeline to

the Gulf through Iran. Last month, CNPC won a tender giving it 60 per cent of the huge Uzen oil field, also in western Kazakhstan. CNPC promised an immediate investment of \$400 million out of a total projected investment of \$1.3 billion and paid Kazakhstan a \$52 million signature bonus.

However, this summer, global interest in Kazakhstan's energy resources accelerated at a remarkable pace. The reason was that in July the US Administration for the first time said that it would not block or impose sanctions on a

proposed gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey that would traverse northern Iran. Oil companies have been barred from investing in Iran or building pipelines through it, because of the threat of American sanctions. Suddenly an opening through Iran offers Kazakhstan a viable route to the Gulf which avoids Russia.

Although possibly premature, leaders in Central Asia now presume that the Americans would not block multiple pipeline routes for their energy resources through Iran.

The shortest possible way from Kazakhstan to the Gulf is through Iran. All political barriers have been removed," President Nazarbayev said in Kuwait earlier this month, in answer to possible American objections to a pipeline to the Gulf. During his visit to three Gulf states, President Nazarbayev said that Kuwait would also help his country to extend oil and gas pipelines to the Gulf through Iran.

Last month Texaco at last won approval to acquire a 20 per cent stake in the Karachaganak oil and gas field from Britain's BG Exploration and Production and Italy's Agip, both of which will reduce their stakes.

Meanwhile Asian companies are moving in fast to bid for oil and gas concessions. Indonesian, Malaysian and several Japanese companies have already set up shop in Almaty. Indonesia's Medco



President Nazarbayev's policies have cleared the way for drilling in the Caspian

group and Japan's Mitsui have taken a stake in the Mangistau oil and gas production association in western Kazakhstan and are planning to invest more than \$4 billion during the next 20 years. Asian companies could move Central Asia towards its natural direction, which is towards Asia. Moreover, Asian companies are unfettered by the sanctions and political restraints faced by American companies.

However, Russia's powerful national gas company Gazprom reacted angrily to these deals, first cutting off the supply of gas to Kazakhstan's domestic users from gas fields in Siberia — a move that created an acute domestic summer crisis for the Govern-

ment. Gazprom's chief executive Rem Vyakhirev said that he would not let Kazakhstan export gas through Russian pipelines. "Under no circumstances will Kazakhstan export gas through Russia," Mr Vyakhirev said last month. "To give up one's market ... would be, at the very least, a crime before Russia," he added.

Russia then made it difficult for Kazakhstan and Western oil companies to continue development of the massive Karachaganak oil field, by not allowing the companies involved to use Russian pipelines to export oil and gas, as promised by Gazprom. Meanwhile Kazakhstan is

also rapidly privatising its ageing gas and oil pipeline system and refineries in an attempt to bring in foreign investment and new technology. Kazakhstan also plans to build several new oil refineries. In June, Belgium's Tractebel won a \$630 million contract to manage Kazakhstan's 9,000-kilometre gas pipeline system for 15 years, for which Kazakhstan received another \$30 million as a signature bonus.

It remains to be seen, however, whether Iran will prove a viable exit route for Kazakh energy. Only when that happens will the Kazakhs be assured that Western investment in other industrial fields, such as development of mineral resources, will follow.

David Rudnick pinpoints the growth sectors

Chance to invest in new markets

Agriculture accounts for about 30 per cent of Kazakhstan's national product and more than 40 per cent of the population is rural. Farming has yet to prove profitable — most farmers are crippled by debt — and is likely to become so only when farm prices and production methods are thoroughly market-oriented. In

the absence of an integrated national market, where prices are known to all producers and consumers, that day may still be some way off.

Farmers' co-operatives after the Western pattern would be an improvement, but starting them up would be costly and demand a considerable injection of capital. But companies are not exactly queuing to invest in Kazakhstan's agri-business. The epitome of old-style Soviet collectivism, agri-business retains a monopolistic character that puts most Western companies off.

Apart from Philip Morris, which acquired the state tobacco monopoly in 1994 on condition that it invested in the tobacco-growing region of Chirchik, there has been little interest.

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Perform, or no portfolio

A healthy banking system is critical for Kazakhstan's stable development, and steps are being taken to put banking on an even keel after the hyper-inflationary shocks of recent years.

Inflation of 1,250 per cent has caused an understandable aversion to saving. The ratio of bank deposits to gross domestic product in Kazakhstan is one of the lowest in the world, as is its savings rate of barely 5 per cent.

The Government must rebuild confidence in the banking system, battered by the related crises of payments arrears and corporate insolvency. To this end, in January it passed legislation allowing it to acquire the shares of

The Government has taken action to restore confidence in the banking system. David Rudnick reports

bankrupt or underperforming banks hit by bad loans to enterprises ensnared in the debt crisis. Two of Kazakhstan's biggest banks, Turan Bank and Alen Bank, which together account for about 20 per cent of all sector loans, were nationalised (temporarily, it was hoped) and then merged to cut operating costs. Their subsequent recapitalisation by the National Bank (central bank) has provided a shot in the arm.

The Government's takeover of the two banks and subse-

quent classification of their portfolios as non-standard may have frozen their loans to an alarming number of enterprises, but the international financial community has hailed it as a step in the right direction.

Ron Freeman, of the investment bank Salomon Bros, believes the move has encouraged managements "to resolve the problems in their loan portfolios for fear of being taken over by the Government under the new law". Another banker adds:

"Bringing non-performing banks under the Government's wing has led to improved provisioning. The International Monetary Fund says it has also reduced non-performing loans in the system to 41 per cent, down from 55 per cent in 1994."

The Government's aim is to prop up Turan-Alen Bank until foreign capital deems it a viable concern.

But the underlying problem of corporate insolvency, a hangover from the Soviet past, remains unbeaten. Freezing non-standard loans actually makes their repayment more uncertain, whatever its potential long-term benefits. In theory, argues Mr Freeman, the Government could clean up the banks' balance sheets "by substituting obligations to itself, smaller in face amount and longer in maturity than the banks' existing portfolios". But for this to work, he adds, "the Government would need to be sure it could repay its own obligations to the banks when they fall due, and that would depend on its revenues expanding appreciably".

Ultimately, he concludes, resolution of the problem depends on an improvement in the Government's sovereign creditworthiness, which will be the benchmark influencing future investment decisions by foreign pension funds and other institutions assessing Kazakhstan.

Meanwhile, a system of domestic private pension funds is being devised by Grigori Marchenko, the high-flying head of the State Committee on Securities. His job is to develop the capital markets, and he sees private pension funds potentially investing their customers' contributions in banks and financial markets, alleviating the current dearth of domestically generated capital.

Most foreign banks and investing institutions are watching and waiting. The Dutch bank ABN-Amro has established a joint venture with Kazkommertsbank, specialising in foreign exchange and trade finance. But deeper commitment to purely domestic corporate and retail loan markets remains beyond the horizon.

AKUENT

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Almaty Merchant Bank

A joint venture with MeesPierson N.V.
Established on June 2, 1995
General license No. 239

Almaty Merchant Bank was established at the end of 1995, when the first signs of macroeconomic and financial stabilization appeared in Kazakhstan and the banking sector had been practically formed. However the extremely competitive environment in which AMB started its operations was not an obstacle, in the contrary, it made for the dynamic development of the newly-established bank.

AMB's success is based on several reasons. On one hand, AMB is a local Kazakhstani bank. The management board and the staff of the bank are almost fully represented by local specialists who perfectly understand all nuances of Kazakhstani business. On the other hand, due to wide international contacts, partnership and shareholding relations with leading Western financial institutions, AMB's activities go beyond the borders of Kazakhstan.

AMB is a universal bank which provides its clients with a wide range of banking services used in the Kazakhstani and international experience and specializes in trade finance and investment projects.

The strategic priorities of the Bank are reliability and high technological level of services. The goal of AMB is to become a leader in the market of banking services in Kazakhstan by introducing international banking experience and advanced banking technologies.

Although AMB has been active on the market for a very short time since June 1996, it already has a reputation of a reliable and competitive financial institution with great opportunities.

A number of the first-class Western banks opened credit lines for AMB to confirm guarantees and letter of credit. The Bank's specialists were trained at MeesPierson N.V. in the Netherlands and professionally handle all kinds of documentary credit, international guarantees and develop advanced schemes for international trade finance operations.

Over a short period of its existence AMB has built up a strong client base including major oil companies, trading companies, leading hotels as well as companies accounting for 2/3 of the country's alcohol, liqueur and winery production.

Apart from traditional banking services of international quality, Almaty Merchant Bank offers its clients a wide range of consultancy services including financial analysis of companies, development of general investment strategies, debt restructuring, holding of auctions and tenders, search for strategic partners as well as services on mergers and acquisitions, privatization, issue of shares and other securities.

In view of recent changes in the banking legislation of Kazakhstan, under which banks are allowed to participate in investment activities, Almaty Merchant Bank is considering setting up private pension funds, companies for management of pension assets, investment funds, insurance and leasing companies.

AMB is also planning to set up an affiliated brokerage firm for operations with Kazakh government securities.

Almaty Merchant Bank - your partner in Kazakhstan

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Reality is a loving cup of rosy Leigh

NEW MOVIES: Geoff Brown
 relishes the way Mike Leigh makes
 you care about his *Career Girls*

Student days. The domestic squalor. The unappetising meals, scraped together from onions, ketchup, anything handy. The verbal jockeying for position. The drinking. The partying. Scenes in Mike Leigh's latest film, *Career Girls*, will bring back memories for many, although you have to approach his North London Polytechnic students through an unusually thick veil of caricature.

Hannah (Katrin Cartledge) maintains a protective barrier of low-level puns and prickly remarks. Annie, her flatmate (Lynda Steadman), is a cringing mouse with downcast eyes and a serious skin problem: "Looks like you done the tango with a cheese grater," Hannah says. As for Ricky, the unstable, burly loafer played by Mark Benton, scarcely a word emerges without being prefaced by an "er", or a finger poked towards an eye.

The level of artifice shown in *Career Girls* takes you by surprise. After the breadth and depth of *Secrets & Lies*, Leigh seems intent on recapturing old vices: reducing people to cruel cartoons, showing talking heads up on the screen without any regard for visual niceties.

But there is a method to Leigh's madness. These scenes are set in the past; and he paints with broad strokes to chart the difference between then and now, when Hannah and Annie meet up again as mature women of 30 with careers, quirks largely ironed out, rediscovering their relationship during one weekend in London.

Over the weekend, Hannah and Annie run into other remnants from their past. Another flatmate jogs past on Hampstead Heath; an estate agent is revealed as Adrian, a student Lothario; while Ricky is encountered, unfortunately, in severe mental disarray, clutching a toy elephant and parked on the steps by their old flat. Viewed realistically, these coincidences take some swallowing; but they help to bind us to the characters and encourage us to journey with them through their hopes, fears and disappointments, facing our own in return.

The tonal range is wide. Ricky's inarticulate expression of love recalls the uncomfortable mood of Leigh's first film, *Brainstorm*. When the women pose for a lark as house-hunters, social satire comes into play: "I suppose on a clear day you can see the class struggle from here," Hannah comments from a flat high above Docklands. Whatever the tone, Cartledge, Steadman and the rest convey it with conviction. By the end of this wayward yet touching film, Leigh's caricatures have become living people, mirrors for ourselves; and you want the best for these career girls as they make the best of their faults and foibles.

From Leigh's version of reality we turn to Hollywood's Opulence and good looks everywhere. Big city glamour. Look at the celebrations in *My Best Friend's Wedding*, held on a Chicago estate garlanded with roses, balloons, burning and the

Career Girls

Curzon West End

15, 87 mins

Modest, wayward and touching Mike Leigh

My Best Friend's Wedding

Warner West End

12, 105 mins

Can Julia Roberts also be funny?

Gallivant

Everyman, 15, 103 mins

New blood for British cinema

Photographing Fairies

Empire, 15, 106 mins

Good images, bad drama

Deep Crimson

Metro, 18, 114 mins

Morbid entertainment from Mexico

painted faces of the rich. All this plus Julia Roberts, tousled hair flowing freely. The other week, in *Conspiracy Theory*, she worked for the Justice Department. Here she pretends to be a New York food critic. But the only role she plays convincingly is Julia Roberts, megastar.

Luckily, *My Best Friend's Wedding* has more to offer than escapist opulence and the tired story of two women fighting over one man. It comes with kinks, and a larger sense of character than other recent romantic comedies. The director P.J. Hogan, the Australian who gave us *Muriel's Wedding*, is not afraid of lurching into fantasy, or giving characters a tart coating. Take Roberts herself: long the best friend of Dermot Mulroney, she boils into a rage when he decides to marry Cameron Diaz, beautiful offspring of a Chicago tycoon. Invited to the wedding, Roberts does her best to derail the journey to the altar. Spite does not make a pretty woman.

Possibly the film would have greater bite with an altered cast. Diaz cannot be faulted: she makes her wealthy bride likeable from the moment she appears at Chicago airport in a violent yellow dress, showering Roberts with hugs. With Roberts, though, we must fill out the blanks in her sculptured face



Lynda Steadman and Katrin Cartledge in Mike Leigh's *Career Girls*, a film very different from *Secrets & Lies*, but equally impressive in its own way

to gauge her anguish and guilt: the role really needs Jean Arthur, Claudette Colbert, or some other mistress of sophisticated comedy from Hollywood's Golden Age.

As for the men, Dermot Mulroney is an affable stooge, swept up in the whirlpool of women's desires. He is never as Robert's gay editor, who flies to Chicago to stoke the fires of jealousy by posing, improbably, as Robert's fiancé. The role could easily have been a mincing caricature, but Everett sails through with elegance and ease, stealing every scene.

We return to Britain for *Gallivant*, the week's most idiosyncratic and joyous movie. Since it avoids all fiction and deals with real people out and about before the camera, it could, I suppose, be labelled a documentary. But this suggests something cold and dull; and Andrew Kotting's first feature-length creation fairly bounces along as it follows the progress of the film-maker, his 85-year-old grandmother and seven-year-old daughter around the coast of Britain.

armed with blunt words and a teacup hat, knitted for Christmas by a neighbour. But we are made gently aware of the differing frailties of young and old, and the need to forge bonds and understanding before too much time passes.

Ironically, the only member of the trio who comes to harm is Kotting himself, who shatters an ankle. But the viewer feels in safe hands as he steers us through family drama, sociology, geography, and vi-

sual poetry. *Gallivant* is a real tonic: it warms the heart, stimulates the eye and brain, and opens up new paths for British cinema.

Photographing Fairies, another British film helped by lottery money, contains striking sights, but is likely to send audiences home scratching their heads. The hero is wildly unsympathetic: a photographer, bereaved on his honeymoon in 1913, who becomes obsessed with a belief in

fairies. Possibly if we shared his grief we could understand what drives him on; as the film stands, neither the script nor Toby Stephens's performance allows us intimacy. The images of John de Borman are frequently lush and lively, but director Nick Willing, experienced at commercials and music videos, cannot shape the material into anything entertaining or edifying.

Deep Crimson, from Mexico's leading director Arturo

Ripstein, suggests more grim times ahead: what fun can you get from an overweight nurse and a seedy gigolo exploiting, then murdering, vulnerable widows and spinsters? In fact, Ripstein's controlling hand and an exemplary cast headed by Daniel Giménez-Cacho and Regina Orozco provide morbid amusement in plenty. Ripstein is a master at moody melodramas and love stories gone wrong, and this story spotlights all his strengths.



Edén Kotting and Gladys Morris on a touching and powerful trip round Britain in Edén's dad's *Gallivant*

They start at Beithell-on-Sea's De La Warr Pavilion. Then they move clockwise, down to Cornwall, up to Cumbria for a spirited performance of *D'Ye Ken John Peel*, across and over to John o'Groats, down to Middlesbrough, circling round to Kent and Sussex, where they meet a café owner who has removed his table tops because people's cups kept leaving marks.

Kotting has an eye for the eccentric. He is no sobersides himself, and likes to lark about with his camera. But beyond the frisky surface, punctured by landscapes and clouds scudding by in fast motion, lies a strong and vibrant human core. Kotting's daughter Eden has Joubert's syndrome, which restricts her communication to sign language and will probably curtail her life. His grandmother Gladys appears indomitable,

"COMPELLING... ELEGANTLY CRAFTED, LITERATE AND CONSISTENTLY ABSORBING"

TOBY STEPHENS BEN KINGSLEY EMILY WOOLF



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PHOTOGRAPHING FAIRIES

A GLIMPSE OF HEAVEN

a film by Nick Willing

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ASHES AND DIAMONDS

Eureka, 18, 1958

ANDRZEJ WAJDA'S planned trilogy about his own generation of Polish youth reached a striking conclusion with this famous drama about a nationalist underground operative (Zbigniew Cybulski) sent to assassinate a Communist leader in the days following the Second World War. But this is no simple period film: Cybulski's dark glasses and disillusionment made him a rebel hero, while Wajda's forceful, expressionist style left realism far behind.

BOX OF MOONLIGHT

First Independent, 15, 1996

JOHN TURTURRO, an over-meticulous electrical engineer, discovers the wonders of anarchy and the open road with a free spirit called the Kid (Sam Rockwell). Tom DiCillo's philosophical road movie tries too hard for goofy comedy and winsome charm, but there are many incidental pleasures en route. Available to rent.

THE CRUCIBLE

Fox Guild, 12, 1996

EARNESTNESS taints Nicholas Hyman's attempt to film Arthur Miller's play about 17th-century witchcraft. As Abigail, the girl who spreads the witchcraft rumours in Salem, Massachusetts, Winona Ryder tries hard, but always seems a modern girl in period clothes, and never connects with Daniel Day-Lewis.

the farmer who enjoyed her favours. The temperature rises with Paul Scofield, cast as the trial judge. But his caressing of the text only underlines the material's best home: the theatre. Available to rent.

THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Orbit, PG, 1960

"FEED me, feceseed me!" cries the exotic plant hatched in Mushnik's flower shop on Skid Row. So its hapless creator (Jonathan Haze) keeps up a supply of the best food available: people. Roger Corman's loopy black comedy was shot in two days, mostly on a single set, but the script and performances are so bright that the time restrictions never cause damage.

STAR TREK FIRST CONTACT

CIC, 15, 1996

PATRICK STEWART battles the Borgs, who threaten to muck up history by barging in on Earth in the year 2063, and assimilating many of the Enterprise crew as they cruise the Universe. This second vehicle for the cast of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is an acceptable adventure, with grandiose sights and sleek special effects, but not much sense of fun. Jonathan Frakes (Commander Riker) directs. Available to rent.

GEOFF BROWN

